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[THE ARREST.]

MY LADY'S LOVERS.

BY

AN EMINENT AUTHOR.

CHAPTER XXVL

CLOSING IN.

The snare
So deftly made and with cunning laid—
May catch the fowler.

BARNET CLAVERLY of the Guards obeyed Meg's call and went with all promptitude to Dumbdikes, where he met with as much cordiality, and it may be a little more, as he had ever experienced.

Meg, as soon as they were able to have a few minutes alone, indulged in a good hearty cry, with her pretty face nestling on his shoulder, and vowed that she would never send him away again, no matter how rich the man who came to woo her might be.

"And you really will marry me as I am?" he said, with the light of joy dancing in his eyes.

"Indeed I will, dear Bet," she sobbed.

"Don't forget that I'm down at the bottom of the hill, and it's only the question of a few weeks, perhaps days, before the Juggernaut car of debt—that's a good idea, Meg, and you must excuse me if I repeat it—the Juggernaut car of debt comes and grinds me to powder."

"It shall grind us together if we are to be ground at all," said Meg; "but I do not think

that there are any difficulties which two people pulling together cannot overcome."

"I am afraid you would do all the pulling," said Claverly, shaking his head sadly. "What am I good for? No, Meg, it was wrong of me to come back again, and I will not drag you down."

"Don't be stupid, Bet, but listen to me."

"For ever with pleasure."

"For ever is a long day, and you would tire of hearing me."

"Would I? That's all you know, but in justice to you—"

"In justice to me give me a fair hearing," said Meg. "I've something very important to say to you. Tommy Dray, my sister's noble animal, is a good fellow, isn't he?"

"A thorough good fellow," replied Claverly, warmly.

"Very well, so far we agree. Now Tommy has some estates in India; he seems to have estates everywhere—"

"Lucky dog."

"No doubt. Well, this land of his in India wants better looking after than it has had for years, and he must have a young, active, aspiring man, not too proud, but still a gentleman, to manage it, as there are native princes near who—"

"Yes, I know, Meg; and to come to the point, Dray wishes me to be his agent."

"That is so, Bet, dear, and it would be such a nice thing for us. We should be monarchs of all we surveyed and—"

"No, Meg, that won't do. I can't take it."

"I thought you were a MAN, Bet, without any paltry pride," said Meg, mournfully, "but now

I see that you want to be the idle gentleman still."

"On my word, Meg," he said, fervently, "it is not so, but I strongly suspect this is what some people would call a 'put up job.' Dray is going to MAKE a berth for me."

"No, indeed he isn't," said Meg, eagerly, "for long before you were thought of he was asking the colonel if he knew of anybody fit for the post."

"If that is the case," said Claverly, "I'll go and thank him a thousand times; but meanwhile I must sell out, and the moment the Jews hear of my doing that they will fall upon me."

"All that has been arranged," said Meg. "Tommy will get his lawyer to settle matters with your creditors, so much down, to be deducted from your first year's pay, and the rest by instalments."

"On my word," exclaimed the delighted lover, "you people have been going it, and all for a worthless beggar like me. But you are sure it is not a jest, Meg?"

"Oh, no, Bet. How can you think that I could be so cruel?"

"And I am not dreaming? Pinch me, Meg—harder. That's it, thank you, and now I'll have one and look up Dray to thank him."

The ONE was extended to half a dozen kisses, and then Bet Claverly tore himself away and went in search of Tommy, whom he found after some trouble in the library with the colonel and a deferential, shrewd-looking man, with the imprint of Scotland Yard upon his face and figure.

"I beg pardon," Claverly said, "I did not know you were engaged. By-and-bye, Dray,



when you are at liberty I shall be glad to have a word with you."

"Don't go, Claverly," said the colonel, "you may be of assistance in one of the strangest affairs that has ever come within my knowledge. This is Mr. Ribston, a detective, who has been engaged in investigating the mystery that hung around Lady Friarly's death."

"And have only succeeded in making it more mysterious still, sir," said Ribston. "We had the coffin up yesterday and there was nothing in it but stones and padding."

"Lady Friarly was not buried at all, then!" exclaimed Claverly.

"Don't know, sir. Anyway, she wasn't buried in Bingley churchyard. Sir Charles is nigh mad, and swears that he knows no more about it than an unborn babe, and he wanted to go to Gaunt House to see the doctor who attended her in her past illness, but I telegraphed to my people and they told me to stop his going."

"You have arrested him?"

"In a way, sir. And we have the whole party that went to the churchyard. We've got them all in a cottage about a mile from the churchyard—analytical party, two navvies, the undertaker, and Sir Charles—and I've come on here to know if you can really give me any information about this Dr. Sabotson."

"I do not know the man even by sight," said the colonel.

"Here's one difficulty, gentlemen," said the detective, "we can't tell whether Lady Friarly is alive or dead."

"Alive I should say," said the colonel.

"It appears so on the face of it, but you never can trust appearances. Now I was thinking, sir—if you will excuse the liberty I am about to take—that if you would help me by sending for this Doctor Sabotson—somebody ill here—and then when we've got him in a room stand by me while I ask him a few questions—"

"I really see no harm in that," said the colonel.

"Very good, sir. Then if you will do it and send a carriage for him so as to lose no time I shall be very grateful."

"It shall be done," said the colonel, "and you had better come with me, Mr. Ribston, and kill part of the intervening time by having some luncheon."

Ten minutes later a groom drove away in a dogcart, bearing a letter from the colonel to Dr. Sabotson asking him to come at once to the Dumbdikes, where he was anxiously expected; and the letter had the desired effect. Two hours later the groom returned, bringing the doctor with him.

He was ushered into a small room on the ground floor, where, to his amazement, he found himself, not with a sick man or woman or a lunatic, but in the presence of three grave gentlemen and the very professional-looking Ribston.

"Don't be alarmed, doctor," said the latter, neatly slipping in between him and the door. "You have only to answer a few questions straightforwardly and you may go."

"This appears to me to be some jest or gross outrage," said Doctor Sabotson, changing colour. "Who is the master of this house?"

"I am," said Colonel Dashwood.

"Then please to remember that I hold you responsible for this."

"I undertake the responsibility without hesitation."

"Everything can be settled very agreeably," said Ribston. "Now, colonel, will you undertake the examination?"

"They have found out that Lady Pearl is with me," was the doctor's thought, and his mind immediately began to plan a line of evasion and defence.

"To come straight to the point," said the colonel, "we want to know all about Lady Friarly's death. Of what complaint did she die, and why was she buried in such haste as we have heard she was?"

"The haste," said the doctor, "is a thing that Sir Charles is responsible for, and Lady Friarly died of pleurisy."

"You gave a certificate to that effect?"

"Yes."

"You followed at the funeral?"

"Sir Charles and I were the only mourners." "Not knowing, of course, that the coffin contained nothing but stones?"

The doctor staggered back and stared vacantly at the colonel. The well-directed shot, fired without any notice whatever, had hit him home.

"Nothing but stones!" he ejaculated.

"Come, come," said the colonel, "you know all about it. The circumstances are very suspicious. What was done to the body—burned or buried in some secret place?"

"Really, gentlemen," said the doctor, recovering a little, "this method of procedure is quite out of the usual course. I am a medical man with a diploma from the Royal College of Surgeons, I—"

"All this is beside the question," said Ribston, coming forward, "and if you do not explain what you did with Lady Friarly's body I have instructions to arrest you."

"On what charge?"

"We shall begin with one of giving a false certificate of the cause of death; what may follow will entirely depend upon what we have the good fortune to find out."

"Gentlemen," said the doctor, after a pause, "you have me in a corner, I admit it, but I assure you I have been guilty of no crime. Lady Friarly is alive!"

Glances were exchanged by the colonel and his friends, but nobody spoke a word but Ribston, who thought the time had come for the usual professional caution.

"Remember, doctor," he said, "that whatever you may say will be produced against you in evidence in the case of a prosecution."

"You can use it as you like," said the doctor, wearily. "I've played my cards badly, and the game is over so far as I am concerned. I've lost, and so I throw my hand up. May I take a chair?"

"By all means," said the colonel.

"I have been an unfortunate man all my life," said the doctor, looking around him with a well-feigned air of injured innocence. "I married at a very early age, and like a prudent man insured the life of my wife. She died, and when I called in the amount due on the policy it was questioned. I stood my trial for it up in the north and was acquitted. No poison was found, although the most careful post-mortem examinations were made."

"Sir Charles knew me well at that time," he continued, after pausing in vain for some expressions of dissent or belief in his innocence, "and he knew that I was a broken man. He sent for me at a time when I was really shaking hands with starvation and invited me to Gaunt House. There he made a proposal to me. It was to poison Lady Friarly."

The listeners, Ribston excepted, started and stared at him in loathing and dismay. The face of the detective never moved a muscle.

"He offered me five hundred pounds and Gaunt House as a home. 'You did the trick well in your own wife's case,' he said, 'do the same for me.'"

"And you assented?" said Colonel Dashwood.

"Apparently, for I was in need of money, but he made a stipulation that I should not claim it until six months after her ladyship's death. He was cunning enough to know that the payment of so much money from him to me might give rise to suspicion. I assented, and then sat down to think what I should do."

"Stop a minute," said Ribston. "I am a little behind. 'Sat down to think what I should do.' All right. Go on."

"Gentlemen," continued the doctor, raising his voice a little, "when a man has once stood in a felon's dock on a charge of murder and escapes the rope he does not want to run the risk again, and I least of all desired to do so. So I concocted a little scheme. I chose a vegetable poison of slow action and fatal, save for one particular antidote, and gave a dose of it to her ladyship. Please, gentlemen, do not shrink from me. I never meant that she should die. I only wanted to make my five hundred pounds sure."

"Be as brief as you can," said Tommy Dray, "and let us get this horrible story over." "Amen," murmured Barnet Claverly.

"After I had administered it, gentlemen, I sought and obtained an interview with her ladyship, who seemed at the time to be on the most affectionate terms with her husband, and he being absent at the time I told her everything. She refused to believe me at first, but I soon gave her incontestable proof. Having done that I made my stipulation—that she should obey me for six months, doing just what I willed, live where I pleased, and obedient in this I was to give her the antidote."

"Steady," said Ribston. "I must put all that down very carefully—hum. 'To give her the antidote.' Yes—ready."

"At first she was almost as bitter against me as she had become against him, and vowed that she would die if only to bring us to the gallows. But I pointed out to her that the poison could never be traced, and then she yielded. I knew her to be a woman who could be trusted and took her word. Then she had the antidote, and I made it of that nature that she seemed to die, and lay for two whole days in a state that was as like death as anything living could be. To carry this out I thought in mesmerism to my aid."

"And where is this unfortunate lady now?" asked the colonel.

"At Gaunt House."

"A prisoner?"

"No; she can, with certain restrictions, walk about at her will."

"That accounts for the ghost Meg saw," said the colonel, addressing Barnet Claverly in an undertone. "A silly woman, playing the ghost, and natural fear gave such aid to the imagination as was needed."

"If you will permit me to return home," said the doctor, "I will undertake to have Lady Friarly here by nine o'clock."

"Can't be done," said Ribston, briefly. "Couldn't let you go at any price."

"Will you detain me now?"

"Yes, sir; sorry to do it, of course, but it must be done. You've overlooked the conspiracy business. That's something serious, you know, and you did give poison—that's more against you. We can prove that through Lady Friarly. Perhaps you may be admitted as Queen's evidence against Sir Charles, but I am not sure that we shall want you."

"Gentlemen," said the doctor, appealing to the others, "is this fair? You entrap me into a confession and then hand me over to the tender mercies of a police constable."

"You were not entrapped," said the colonel, curtly, "and we made you no promises."

"Besides, I warned you, you know," remonstrated Ribston.

"I recall all I have said," cried the doctor, leaping up, "it is not a jest. I—I—"

Ribston was by his side, and a clicking noise bore witness to a very dexterous adjustment of the handcuffs.

"Now we're quite comfortable," said the detective, "and have nothing more to fret about. If you don't object, colonel, I should like to have him kept here for a few hours while I ride over to Gaunt House."

"I will guard him myself," the colonel said.

"And if any gentleman cares to go with me," muttered the constable, "I shall be glad of his company, if only to bear witness to what I find there."

"I'll go," said Tommy Dray.

"Thank you, sir," said the officer, "and as there is no time to be lost we will go at once. You will look well after the doctor, colonel, won't you?"

"He shall not be lost sight of for a moment," replied the colonel.

"I'm a little particular, colonel," said Ribston, "as it is a very nice little case, and I don't want it spoiled. In the ordinary way of duty I ought to send for some constables to take charge of him, but I might get a man here who would rob me of half the glory. It's my ambition to have all the professional credit attached to it."

"I have no desire to share it with you," the colonel replied, with a smile.

Horses were scarce at Dumbekides, but Tommy had two of his own just fit for the service required, and he and the detective set forth with all speed for Gaunt House, the latter sitting straight and square in the saddle, bumping in true military fashion.

"You have been in the service?" said Tommy.

"When a young fellow, sir," replied Ribston, "I was dissatisfied with a good home and ran away from it. I had three years with the Seventeenth Lancers and that was quite enough soldiering for me—all hard work and no profit."

"You can take the dykes, then?"

"I'll take anything after you, sir."

"Then we will go straight away for Gaunt House."

And straight they went accordingly. It was still daylight when Ribston reined up at the gate, and, dismounting, rang the bell with no very gentle hand. The iron clapper gave out a sound that was heard far over the marshes, but it soon ceased. The two men waited several minutes, but there was no response.

"There must be somebody else in the house," said Ribston.

"Ring again," said Tommy Dray.

The detective rang again, louder than before, but the minutes passed and the sun now near the horizon was going steadily down.

"Whoever is inside seems to smell a rat," said Ribston; "but we must not be done. We must get in somehow before darkness comes on. Kindly hold my horse, sir, while I see if I can climb over the gate."

CHAPTER XXVII.

FIRE.

With eagerness the flames leap forth
Destroying all. The air is hot, and man
Lies groaning in their helplessness.

The gates of Gaunt House were made at a time when it was occasionally necessary to defend the place against a foe, and on the top the cunning artificers of the time had arranged some revolving spikes that would have baffled a better climber than Ribston, the detective.

He saw them before he began the ascent, but he trusted that time had rusted and fixed them, forgetting that what time had done could be undone by man. Doctor Sabotson had noted these spikes, and, knowing their usefulness, had given Crewel the task of putting them in order and oiling them—a task that had been performed with great care.

"No go here," the detective called out, as he laid hold of the spikes and they began to revolve. "It would puzzle a monkey to get over them."

"Shall I ring again?" Tommy asked.

"Ay, do, sir, and ring away until somebody comes."

The bell was set clanging again, and Tommy Dray pulled until his arms ached. Then the detective took another turn, but the result was the same—nobody responded to their summons.

"What's to be done now?" Tommy asked.

"I don't know," said Ribston, puzzled, "it isn't like an ordinary house, and unless we had a piece of artillery here I don't see how we are to force our way in."

"The people in charge must have had orders to admit nobody."

"That's it, sir; but I wonder if there is not a way of making them. Hallo! house there—hallo!"

"The sun is down, Mr. Ribston."

"Yes, and there's no moon to-night, worse luck. I'm afraid there's nothing to do but to ride back to Dumbekides and wait until to-morrow, when we must bring some help. A few sacks fixed on those spikes will enable us to get over."

"I don't think there ought to be any time lost," said Tommy, resolutely; "you ride back and bring the help. Lanterns and torches can

be got, and there are a lot of servants about. For all we know Lady Friarly may be murdered."

"And you really will stop here alone, sir?" asked Ribston.

"Certainly."

"Then all I can say is that you are about the pluckiest gentleman I ever met."

"Don't waste time in paying compliments to me, but get along to Dumbekides."

Ribston touched his hat and put spurs to his horse. If he wished to take a straight course home there was no time to be lost, for the sun was down and night fast coming on.

Tommy Dray watched him as he drove away until the forms of both horse and man were lost in the gathering shadows.

Dismounting he tethered his horse to the gate and walked to and fro. The nights were chilly and the marsh was inclined to be misty, but not so covered with haze as it usually was in the autumn evenings.

"It is a good job that the notion of Lady Friarly's ghost is exploded," thought Tommy, "or for the life of me I dare not be here now. What's that—somebody shouting?"

He paused and listened, and something like the muffled cry of a human being reached his ears, but whether it was from Gaunt House or the marshes he could not tell.

"I wonder if it is any use ringing again?" he muttered; "perhaps if I do some big brute of a fellow will rush out and either pound the life out of me or cut my throat or shoot me. No, I think I had better keep quiet."

The darkness soon came, and the night being a cloudy one the lone watcher had not even the stars to cheer him. Anything more wretched than being sentinel at such a spot can scarcely be conceived.

But Tommy Dray had a stout heart in his little body, and having some cigars in his pocket he lighted one and sauntered some dozen paces up and down the bridge that spanned the road, occasionally pausing to look or listen for anybody coming.

Time lagged wearily with him, and he was surprised when he examined his watch by the aid of his lighted cigar to find that he had not been there half an hour alone, and yet it seemed to him as if he had been there five times as long.

"They can't be here anyhow for another hour," he muttered. "How different the moments fly when I'm with Lucy, and yet they are the same length. What an odd thing! I'll try to solve the problem."

He was not to solve the problem, for at that moment he again heard the muffled sound of a human voice, and this time he was sure it came from Gaunt House.

"And it is like a cry for help," he muttered, shuddering. "Perhaps somebody is being brutally murdered. What an awful thing it is to be here and not able to help them! But I can ring the bell again. That may cause a diversion."

The sound of the bell on the still night air had a terrible effect, but Tommy kept pulling until he saw a light flashing in one of the lower windows.

"At last," he said, grimly. "I thought I should rouse them. Now for it—peace or war! A stout riding-whip is better than nothing in such a situation as this."

The light moved about as if carried by some person with an uncertain hand, then it suddenly brightened until the bar of the latticed window stood out bold and black, then died away a little, and finally broke out into a deep red, accompanied by a roaring and a crackling sound.

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed the watcher, "the house is on fire!"

Of that there was no doubt, for suddenly the flames leaped up, apparently from the floor, and one of the windows being open a tongue of flame burst forth with a hiss, and winding itself about the latticed panes, speedily melted the lead and set the wood-work on fire.

The place was old, and there being a vast amount of wood-work in it the fire rapidly spread, and Tommy Dray, standing dismayed at the gate in utter helplessness, saw it run from

room to room and burst successively from the windows with incredible rapidity.

It may be that in the intense excitement he laboured under he lost all record of time, but when thinking over the dim event in after days he was impressed with the belief that it only took five minutes to wrap the ancient mansion in a blaze.

No matter how long or short the time it took there it was, alight from end to end, burning with a terrible fury, the dry wainscoting and the old flooring crackling and sputtering as the flames rapidly reduced them to ashes.

"My God!" exclaimed the watcher, in his agony; "where are the people inside? Why don't they come forth? Are they asleep? I'll hallo—fire! fire!"

The darkness of the night was dispelled from the spot, a rich, red glare lying on the flat lands for miles around. High in the still air rose a great column of flame, awe inspiring in its vastness, terrible for a lone man to gaze upon.

He stood with his eyes fixed upon the porch of the house that faced the gates, hoping and praying that the huge oak door might open and let out those whom he believed to be inside. At such a time no man could have gazed on unmoved or indifferent to the fate of the most contemptible wretch and hardened criminal shut in between these fiery walls, and Tommy Dray shrieked and halloed for the inmates to come forth as if those he loved most dearly had been in peril.

His frightened horse, after wildly plunging, broke loose and galloped away over the marsh unheeded.

All Tommy's thoughts were now concentrated on the blazing house and those within it. With nervous hands he shook the all-resisting gates and shouted until he was hoarse. The bars became hot to his touch, showers of sparks fell thickly upon him, but he still held on and shouted, when it must have been apparent even to him in his excitement that all hope of saving anyone was gone.

At length he let go his hold and went staggering back over the drawbridge, for a light breeze had sprung up and blown dense volumes of smoke, bearing in their bosoms hot tongues of flame, towards him, and half-blinded and with blistered hands he stood at a safe distance, looking on the conflagration in a state of helpless horror.

From this he was soon awakened by the clatter of horses' feet and the shouting of men's voices. Then Barnet Claverly came riding up in hot haste, and close upon him was the colonel, half a dozen servants, and Ribston, the detective.

"What has happened? Who did it?" cried Claverly.

"I know nothing more than that the fire suddenly burst out and has run through the place with awful rapidity," replied Tommy.

"But the people within?"

"I have not seen one of them. How many are there?"

"Three," groaned the colonel; "that fellow Sabotson has made what he calls a clean breast of it, and confessed to having Lady Pearl there in confinement. He did it at the instigation of that scoundrel Friarly. Merciful Heaven! can it be true? But surely they have escaped!"

"Nobody has come out by the gates, but—but there may be some other outlet."

"None," groaned the colonel. "I know the place well. But did you hear nothing—no shouting for help?"

"Yes," said Tommy Dray, "I heard some muffled cries, such as might come from a person shut up in some inner room."

"That was Lady Pearl in her prison," said the colonel. "What an awful fate, poor thing, and what am I to say to Blackfern? Will not he and others curse me for inviting them down here?"

"I don't see that you are to blame," said Barnet Claverly.

"Of course you are not," said Tommy.

"Dumbekides has always been most com-
foundedly unfortunate," said the colonel. "Only three years ago young Patterson broke his neck

when trying a half-broken horse at the dykes, and it was here that my father got a fall that made him an invalid during the last seven years of his life. I'll shut the place up and leave it to-morrow for ever."

His usually genial face was marred with the sorrow that had laid hold of him, and the hand that held the reins of his horse trembled as he turned his horse's head so that he might hide his emotion. Strong men do not care to be seen with tears in their eyes, and the colonel—all honour to him—was weeping like a woman.

Very little more was said, but in silence they watched the progress of the fire, which soon reached its climax and spent itself. The old walls split and cracked, and some of the ceilings fell, but the stonework stood the test more bravely. Floor after floor and the roof fell in, shooting myriads of many-coloured sparks high into the air, but the massive walls, though charred and broken here and there, remained standing until an explosion was heard, then the whole structure—outer and inner walls, iron gate and drawbridge—collapsed, and Gaunt House was a thing of the past.

The noise of the explosion, coming so unexpectedly, startled the horses and sent them galloping off furiously in different directions. The men were all good riders, and with the exception of two stable-helpers, who found themselves rolling with their steeds in a dyke, speedily reined up.

Gaunt House was now nothing more than a heap of smouldering ashes, giving out a light similar to that which emanates from a lime kiln, but the men had brought torches, and having lighted them the whole party turned homewards.

One of the helpers gave up his horse to Tommy Dray, and the three gentlemen and Ribston rode forward, leaving the others to come on at their leisure.

"Some devilish work has been done here," the colonel said, "and Sabotson is at the bottom of it."

"A man would scarcely burn his house down unless he had some better reason than I can think of the doctor having," said Barnet Claverly. "His subordinate may have had something to do with it."

"Sabotson said he was a man capable of anything."

"Trying, of course, to shoulder his sin upon him."

"He seems to have been a bit in the man's power. But what a horrible affair it is. Who is to tell it to Blackfern? And to think that we have all this time been indulging in blaming Lady Pearl for misconduct."

"I should go to Lord Ardinlaun and get him to break the news to the duke," said Tommy Dray. "Shall I go up to-morrow?"

"I wish you would, there's a good fellow," said the colonel. "I am not so young as I was, and my nerves are thoroughly unstrung. The girls too will take this to heart, for they were found of Lady Pearl."

"She was a very handsome woman," said Tommy Dray, meditatively. "I used to be awful spoons upon her, poor thing, and now to think that she is nothing but a heap of charred ashes. Oh! it's horrible."

On reaching Dumbekies they found Meg and Lucy, who had watched the fire from the distance, anxiously expecting their return. They wanted to know what had taken place, but none cared to tell them.

"There has been a fire at Gaunt House," the colonel said, "and we will tell you all about it to-morrow."

"You are keeping something back from us," said Lucy. "Where are they whom you were going to bring back with you?"

"We have not been able to find them," said the colonel.

"Not find them?"

The eyes of his daughters were fixed on him, and the colour was fast leaving their cheeks. Already they had an inkling of the real nature of the disaster.

"We were unable to get into Gaunt House,"

said the colonel, "the gates were closed—and—and—"

"Is the house completely burnt down?" asked Lucy, impatiently. "Tell me the truth—don't deceive me."

"It is."

"And has nobody been rescued?"

"We have seen nobody."

"And to think of the hard and cruel things we have said of Pearl," said Lucy. "Oh! Meg, how can we ever forgive ourselves?"

The hard and cruel things she had said had not been particularly spiteful, but they seemed to be so just then, and the sisters shed many bitter tears together ere they went to rest.

Ribston, the detective, meanwhile took charge of the doctor, who had been guarded by a couple of stalwart footmen, and told him of the burning of Gaunt House. The doctor flew into a state of fury.

"That is Crevel's work," he said. "I always feared the fellow would play me some devilish trick."

"And what do you think he has done?"

"Robbed the place—I had two hundred pounds in notes in my desk—and set fire to it."

"But the ladies—surely he would set them free."

"Not he," said the doctor, curtly, "he is a man who will have nobody to share his secrets. If he had set them free he would have left witnesses of his crime. I should say he fastened them in a room and left them to the mercy of the fire."

"But surely he could not be such a brute."

"Crevel," said the doctor, "is brute enough for anything."

(To be Continued.)

SCIENCE.

SPONTANEOUS IGNITION.—Attention has recently been called to some peculiar cases of spontaneous ignition of hydrogen in air, the phenomenon having been noticed, it seems, in factories where quantities of zinc were being dissolved in hydrochloric acid for the preparation of zinc chloride. Violent explosions took place when no flame was near, and it was eventually ascertained that the gas took fire spontaneously. It is thought to be caused by fragments of very porous zinc, which, when lifted above the surface of the liquid, during the violent evolutions of the gas, and so brought into contact with hydrogen and air, act just as spongy platinum would do under the circumstances. The performance of such operations in the open air is recommended. The ignition can be shown, according to M. Hoffman, by treating a few kilogrammes of finely divided zinc with acid; the zinc dust may even ignite with water.

THE TRUNKS OF TREES.—Recent botanical research has shown that the trunks of trees undergo daily changes in diameter. From early morning to early afternoon there is a regular diminution till the minimum is reached, when the process is reversed and the maximum diameter is attained at the time of twilight; then again comes a diminution, to be succeeded by an increase about dawn—an increase more marked than that in the evening. Variations in diameter are believed to coincide with the variations of tension, but they are shown to be inverse to the temperature, the maximum of the one corresponding roughly to the minimum of the other, and so on. In connection with these investigations it may be remarked that the height of a man is greater in the morning than in the afternoon, and again that, other influences being suspended, the barometer is higher in the morning than in the afternoon.

ELECTRIC SEARCH FOR TREASURE.—To the systematic treasure-seeker a hopeful prospect is opened out by an electrical achievement lately reported to us from the United States. It would appear that during the summer of 1843 the

schooner Vermilion, laden with copper bars, foundered in Lake Erie during a heavy gale of wind. Her cargo was valued at 60,000 dollars, and its owners spared no pains or expense to recover it, but in vain. The Vermilion had gone down in the deepest part of the lake, and after several fruitless attempts to discover her whereabouts the search for her was abandoned as hopeless. Thirty-eight years had elapsed since her loss when an Erie boat, provided with an electrical apparatus for the detection of metal substances, was cruising about the lake one fine morning. Suddenly the person in charge of the machine observed unmistakable indications denoting the presence of metal beneath the surface of the water over which the boat was at that time passing. The bearings of the spot were at once taken, and on the 3rd of last month a couple of divers were conveyed thither and lowered into the lake. They alighted on the deck of the submerged schooner and succeeded in penetrating into its hold, whence they extracted and brought to the surface one of the long-missing copper bars. The entire cargo has since been recovered. After this successful feat who can doubt that it is reserved to electricity to solve all the old-standing mysteries of sunken Spanish and Dutch galleons, British treasure ships, and piratical hoards that have defied mere human ingenuity and perseverance for so many years past?

EFFECTS OF LIGHTNING ON TREES NEAR A TELEGRAPH WIRE.—Some instructive facts in this connection have been brought to light by M. Montigny, in recent examination of poplars bordering part of a road in Belgium between Rochefort and Dinant. The part in question is some 4,600 metres in length, and runs westward; it is level for some distances, then rises gradually to a height of 61 metres through a wood, traverses a wooded plateau 200 metres in extent, then descends, still through wood, to a plain. A telegraph wire runs near the row of Virginia poplars on the north side, and it appears that out of nearly 500 poplars forming this row, 81, or a sixth, have been struck by lightning. Hardly any have been struck in the other row. The trunks have been mostly struck on their south side and nearly opposite the wire. Comparing different portions of the road, it is found that in the horizontal part none of the (129) trees show injury from lightning, or at most only one (a doubtful case), but as the road rises through the wood cases quickly multiply, and on the wooded plateau as many as nine out of fourteen trees, or 64 per cent., have been struck. On the slopes the proportion is 25 per cent. M. Montigny distinguishes three kinds of injuries: (1) the bark torn and detached on a limited part of the trunk; (2) a furrow, straight or (rarely) spiral, made on the tree, from near the wire, down to the ground; and (3) a peculiar oval wound, with longer axis vertical, and its margin coloured light brown. Now the furrows, which are probably due to the most violent discharges, are relatively most frequent on the plateau and on the western slope, which the storms usually reach first. M. Montigny is of opinion that the lightning, while provoked by the wire, does not strike this first, then the tree, but strikes the tree directly. His conception of the process is to the following effect: Suppose a thunder-cloud charged with positive electricity. A long telegraph wire under it, though insulated, may acquire as great negative tension in the nearest part as if in direct communication with the ground, and the tension in the greater the nearer to the cloud. While the inductive influence affects the wire most near objects, such as trees, share in the influence according to their conducting power. The lightning, attracted in the direction of the wire, yet does not strike this, the insulating cups presenting an obstacle to its prompt and rapid escape. It finds a better conductor to earth in a neighbouring poplar, wet with rain. From the facts indicated it results that of two similar houses, one built on a plain, the other in a wood, and having a telegraph wire fixed to them, the latter is the more liable to injury by lightning, and the danger is greater if the wood enclosing the house be upon an eminence.



[AMONG STRANGE FRIENDS.]

SCARCELY SINNING.

A NEW NOVEL.

BY A POPULAR AUTHOR.

CHAPTER XV.

Yes, she lies there, and is at rest
In the dim valley clasped about
By silence from the things without—
Like a young bird within the nest.

UNDER a canopy of pall-like clouds a chaos of waves raged and hissed and foamed in mad tumult.

Yet this wild confusion was not brought about by the giant forces of elemental war, the tornado, or the cyclone; nor was the spot any portion of the face of earth-embracing ocean. It was merely a little land-locked lake, surrounded by snow-tipped mountains, from whose peaked summits an avalanche of stormy wind had hurled itself down.

Had it been possible for the eye of a spectator to pierce the gloomy shroud of vapour that hung over the lake it might have beheld something beside the turmoil of the warring waters.

Through the waves rode a slender fabric of storm-beaten timbers. It was a capsized barque, of which little save the keel appeared above the surface. That portion of the hull, however, rode erect and steady, balanced, maybe, by the submerged mast and sails and cordage which hung suspended beneath.

To the small portion of the boat not submerged was clinging, limpet-like, a human form.

That of a woman.

It had been easy to see that her hold on the damp and slippery hull was not maintained by any exertion of voluntary will, but that the tenacious grasp of those slender fingers was an unconscious act.

The girl's face was of death-like pallor, the placid eyelids were closed, the luxuriant hair hung dank and tangled around her.

On, on, and still onward the storm carried the capsized boat and its unconscious burden.

The tourmente is ordinarily of short duration, but the one in which *La Hirondelle* met her fate was one of unusual force and lasted for a considerable time.

In the strange, almost trance-like state in which the girl clung to the boat she had intervals in which her faculties brightened and perception returned to her. During these intervals of lucidity she was able to take some note of her surroundings.

In one of them she was aware that she had encountered, floating also, she knew not how, the body of a woman whose face was like her own—a woman whom she had learned to love.

And it was in a flood of tears that she lapsed again into merciful insensibility.

How long she remained dead to all around, to the raging of the tempests and the hungry dashing of the wavelets, the girl knew not. She only knew that at her wakening the scene was all changed.

She found herself lying on a low, shelving shore, above which were green grassy banks redolent of flowers, and in the background rose high mountains gleaming in the light of the westerling sun. Stiff and chilled she assumed a sitting posture by an effort, and parting back her hair from her face strove to think.

Where was she, and how had she come thither?

Surely when she had set foot in the ill-fated boat, whose battered hull she saw lying bottom upwards a few yards off, it had been morning and the sun was high in the heavens. Now he was sinking to his rest, and his slant beams touched the snow-capped summits of the hoary hills with a glory of amber and ruby and fiery topaz.

Slowly, and little by little she gathered together the incidents immediately prior to

the catastrophe. Then her thoughts centred on the event itself.

Where were her companions?

The girl who seemed like her second self, whom she had learned to love so well, the kindly though bluff-mannered soldier, the light-hearted, volatile boatman and his handsome boy.

Was she the sole survivor?

A groan burst from the girl's pale lips.

"I was the only one who clung to that frail refuge," she murmured. "And what hope was there in that tumult for those who had gained no such ark of refuge?"

She sat for some time longer engrossed in gloomy reverie until the coming of the evening shadows and some urgent indications of her own weakness compelled her to action. Then she strove to rise, but found that at first her cramped limbs refused to obey her bidding. At length she succeeded, and then the innate instinct of self-preservation, rarely absent from any, especially the young, drove her to seek some shelter.

She knew nothing of where she was, but finding presently some indications of a beaten track she followed it, and after a walk which to her stiffened limbs seemed one of almost intolerable agony she came in sight of the glad radiance streaming from the windows of a cottage.

She reached its door and rapped faintly. The deep baying of a dog was the first reply, but presently a rough voice commanded the animal to keep silence, and the next moment the door was opened by a man dressed in the peasant costume of that part of Italy.

Through the open door the benighted girl could see that another man, an aged woman, and a girl of remarkable beauty were also denizens of the poor habitation.

She told her story simply in the best Italian she could muster. She had hardly said a score of words, however, ere the man drew her in and spoke to the elder woman.

"Poor little angel," he said, in his broad patois,

"she has escaped from the lake, thanks to a merciful God and the protection of our Lady. See, her clothes are still wet. Take her therefore to thy chamber, my Bice, and garb her in somewhat of thine own poor vestments."

The woman needed no second bidding. She led the visitor from the room and presently returned with her clad in the clumsy but showy attire of an Italian peasant woman.

It became the young girl well, as all apparel becomes those who are beautiful. The scarlet bodice clung close to her rounded bust, and her glorious hair, close-gathered, gleamed bright beneath the snowy panni.

The girl seated herself amongst the little family circle, utterly exhausted and sick at heart. The people who had sheltered her pressed her to partake of the polenta and other coarse dishes which formed the staple of their evening meal. But to eat was impossible, and conversation was almost equally distasteful.

To the many questions in the curious Italian patois which her kindly hosts propounded the visitor returned but the briefest of answers. She related the details of the accident, however, in sufficient detail to enable them to understand it, and at the conclusion of the tale the elder man shook his head gravely and proceeded to relate interminable stories of similar disasters, either legendary or which had fallen within his own experience.

The visitor learned moreover that the abode in which she had found refuge was on the opposite side of the lake to that upon which the hotel which she had left in the morning was situated.

At length, pleading fatigue, she expressed a wish to retire to rest, and was shown up a ladder to a little room, or rather loft, under the roof, partly filled with unthreshed maize, where her hostess had made her up a bed. Everything was, however, excessively clean, and mean although the place appeared, it was, in fact the best bedroom of the poor habitation.

The girl removed the white panni from her head, took off the stout peasant's boots and the outer portion of her apparel, and sank wearily upon the couch provided for her. But not to sleep. That was a thing impossible. She simply sought rest from bodily weariness. From torture of mind there was no escape.

Her thoughts turned first to her companions. She could not doubt that both had perished. It was not possible that anyone could have swam or floated to safety in that terrible storm without support, and the sailing boat, though it had capsized, had in no manner broken up, so as to afford any floating wreckage of mast or spar. Yes, both must be dead. At the thought the girl's tears flowed more freely than they had done during the past hours. The stunned sensation which had clung to her departed now and left her free to feel the terrors of the past and—

The fears of the future!

Her sobs grew fainter and her tears gradually ceased to flow as anxiety crept into her heart.

What should now be her course? Did not the catastrophe of the past day give her an opportunity of shaping her future life anew?

The east was faintly brightening with saffron rays ere she had settled this matter, but a decision was at length arrived at, and worn-out nature succumbed to fatigue and slumber came to close with merciful touch the violet eyes.

The next morning broke bright and beautiful over the world, the sun visible at length above the hilly horizon, tingeing with his slant rays the mountain peaks with amethyst and gold. From the little lattice window of her place of refuge the girl (who had risen early) looked out on the scene of the terrible events of the previous day, and could scarcely realise that the scene could be the same. The sky above was unflecked by one cloud-speck, the sky was of one deep, unbroken sapphire tint, birds were pouring forth their carols from the boughs, whose leaves were scarcely stirred by a breath. Stretching out at a little distance was the lake, whose mirror-like surface was scarcely stirred

by the faintest ripple. Could that quiet water which lent to the scene an idyllic charm be the same as the cruel, hungry whirlpool of the preceding day?

When the girl descended the rude ladder which led from the loft-like sleeping-place to the keeping-room of the cottage she found the family assembled for the morning meal. She was not attired now in the costume of an Italian contadina, for upon awaking she had found her own clothes, carefully dried, had been placed by her bedside. So she was dressed now in the jaunty boating-suit in which she had started on the ill-omened trip in the *Hirondelle*.

She was very pale and silent, but youth had again asserted its supremacy over every trouble, and she ate with tolerable appetite of the coarse food placed before her. Breakfast over, the peasant offered to find a friend who could take her across the lake. A strong shudder ran over the visitor's frame at the suggestion, which she promptly negatived. She could not again trust her life to its treacherous keeping. But if he knew a path around it and would guide her she should be grateful, and he would not go unrewarded.

The peasant acceded to this proposal with alacrity. His daily work could well spare him for awhile, and probably the English miladi would be generous.

She appeared to be so, judging by the liberality of her recompense for the night's shelter accorded to her and the warmest thanks to the peasant's wife at parting.

Her guide plodded along stolidly enough by the track which would most readily lead them to their destination, and his companion walking with a light and elastic step at his side gradually drew him into conversation on the subject which lay nearest to her heart.

"And you think it impossible that my friends have been saved, André?" she queried.

"Ah, yes, miladi, quite impossible," was the response.

"But you said last night that such cases had occurred."

The man nodded.

"And that in some instances the fact had not become known for some time after the event."

"That is also true, miladi, and not to be gained. The will of the great God sometimes brings about that which seems to us miraculous. But it is very seldom that such things are. I have dwelt here, man and boy, for five-and-forty years, and have met no case in which people have been saved from the terrors of the sea when their boat has been wrecked save by the aid of others or the help of some floating substance as with you. The strongest swimmer could not hope to keep himself afloat five minutes. What chance then had the old man and the lady of whom you speak? If the boatman and his boy perished (as has doubtless been the case) what hope was there for the passengers?"

"I have escaped."

"Thanks to the Blessed Virgin, *Maris Stella*, Star of the Sea as she is, you have escaped, miladi, but the others had not your chance."

The girl sighed heavily.

"We shall know the worst soon at least," she said, after a long interval of silence. "The—"

She could not force her lips to say the word. Her companion trudged on still stolidly. He had not the tact to perceive her pain.

"They," she continued at length, speaking of her friends as one speaks of the living, not the dead, "will of course be recovered?"

André shook his head dubiously.

"That is by no means certain, miladi," he returned. "Scores of skeletons lie beneath your shining surface. Some bodies get washed ashore, but more are never seen again, and it may be so with those of your friends."

The sky was long and somewhat toilsome, but at length the town came into sight. As they proceeded farther a sudden bend brought them close to the Hotel de la Couronne. There was no commotion of any kind apparent. A couple of little knots of visitors were gathered on the piazza conversing apparently with some excite-

ment. That was the only sign that a tragedy had been enacted, save that, despite the glorious morning, the few sailing-boats of the place remained made fast at the landing-place.

Having remunerated her guide the girl made her way with hasty steps to the main entrance to the hotel. She did not note the curious glances which some of the folks on the piazza cast at her. She was conscious, however, that Simon Dawson was not amongst them, and felt grateful that she was spared the affliction of his hated presence.

Having entered the hotel she sought an immediate interview with the proprietor. He came at once in obedience to the summons. He was an excellent specimen of his kind, gentlemanly and respectful.

An expression of mingled astonishment and commiseration was on his countenance as he entered.

"Have my friends returned?" was the eager question which greeted him.

The man shook his head mournfully.

"Mais non, mademoiselle," he said. "They have not—nor— He hesitated. "Mademoiselle must be strong and brave," he went on, presently; then dropping his voice to a whisper, he added, "There is no hope—no slightest hope of their safety. Doubtless they, as well as the boatman and his son, have perished."

At this confirmation of her worst fears the girl broke down and, hiding her face in her hands, sobbed passionately.

The hotel-keeper respected her grief and stood silently waiting until the paroxysm should have passed.

When the tear-suffused violet eyes were at length raised the girl's quivering lips queried:

"Have any endeavours been made to learn the truth?"

"Undoubtedly, mademoiselle," was the response. "We have done all we could, and Mr. Fulton, the valet, and mademoiselle's own maid have gone together to make inquiries even now."

"And when may we look for their return?"

"It is not possible to say. They cannot do much in the way of search, for the shores of the lake are not familiar to them. But there are others who will seek with more of knowledge and not less zeal. The boatman has left behind him some to whom he is dear, and he is, moreover, a favourite amongst all. So his friends are seeking in several parties both upon the lake and around its shores."

There was no more to be learned of the man, and with a heavy heart the girl came to the conclusion that for her now there was nothing but patient waiting.

She would have liked to have passed the slow hours of suspense which must elapse before all the search parties should return in restless pinnings up and down the long verandah but for one fear.

She might there encounter Simon Dawson, and even under the heavy weight of her probable bereavement she could not divest herself of a shuddering fear of meeting the usurer's son.

It did not occur to her to inquire whether Simon was still at the hotel.

The only safe refuge appeared to be the seclusion of her own apartments, and thither the girl retired, sad and apprehensive, to await the reports of those who had gone out.

CHAPTER XVI.

Love reckons hours for months, and days for years,
And every little absence is an age.

THE tropic day was drawing to its close, and the earth seemed to breathe a universal sigh of relief at being at length free from the ardent fervour of the sun's fiery caresses.

Yet there were perhaps few spots of Indian ground in the presidency where the torrid heat was so softly mitigated by the gentler influences of cooling and health-giving breezes as the wooded hills of Ghara Tal.

The mountain range so termed was limited in extent and not particularly striking in point of altitude. It could boast no giant peaks shooting skyward, no dazzling cones of eternal snow, such as the monstrous range of the Himalayas possessed. Compared with those glorious summits this western hill range seemed dwarfed and mean.

Nor was the giant majesty which Ghara Tal lacked compensated by its possession of any of the appendages of civilised life. It had no ambitious sanatorium to which dyspeptic Anglo-Orientalists could resort to brace their shattered nerves by cooler breezes and relax their minds in mild flirtations. No, the row of the tree-covered hills was outside civilisation, and seldom had the foot of the European conqueror trod its slopes.

The locality was in fact a robber-den.

It was well fitted for this part from its natural features. The steep ascent of the hills was aided by no roads nor even foot-tracks. The trees, never of any considerable height, grew so thickly in many places as to constitute a "scrub" of underwood almost impenetrable save to those used to the mazy, tortuous passages by which alone movement was practicable. In many places the ground was rent by enormous ravines, whose sheer sides descended hundreds of feet. In others rapid cataracts flashed over the broken rocks.

All nature, indeed, seemed cruel and sinister in the gloomy spot. It was not alone that things inanimate appeared to threaten the stranger who trespassed in the Ghara Tal, but organised nature—plant and bird and beast—showed their disposition to aid in his repulse or destruction. Many of the ravines were filled with a bush vegetation of evil-looking, livid-blooming shrubs and climbers, whose breath was as pestilential to man as that of the upas-tree was fabled to be. In the jungles at the foot of the hills crouched tiger and cheetah. Above the stunted trees sailed carrion birds, and upon them perched bare-necked, ghastly vultures, and serpents whose lightest bite was death, and strange and repulsive forms of insect life abounded.

Not a promising spot to find humanity—save, perhaps, in the specimen of an adventurous "shikaree" (sportsman) or a foolhardy traveler.

Yet man was there.

Perhaps we should employ the term with many restrictions, and might use to the inhabitants of Ghara Tal the contemptuous disclaimer of Macbeth when the murderers laid claim to the title of "men."

Ay, in the catalogue to go as men!

For they were the common enemies of humanity in general—men whose hands were against every man and against whom every man's was uplifted—bandits, robbers, dacoits.

A strange class, composed of very varied elements. There were many bands, for they had a certain criminal organisation of their own, and each federation comprised widely differing members, held together simply by the common bond of necessity and their hatred of and contempt for the honest toiler. There might be seen shoulder to shoulder the Mahometan and the Hindoo, the brahmin and the pariah, the emaciated "ryot" and the muscular and eagle-eyed Pathan, hill-men almost as black as negroes, noble-looking as Sikhs, and white as Anglo-Indians. Here might be found the dwarf Gnoorka and the olive-eyed Chinaman—nay, even at times a few in whose widely different features it was not difficult to trace European ancestry, albeit those features were bronzed by an equatorial sun.

Many times had energetic governors and enterprising commanders essayed to extirpate the predatory gangs, who rendered the immediate vicinity of the hill-range uninhabitable for honest peasants, and even carried on their ravages at a distance of hundreds of miles from their lairs.

The generality of expeditions undertaken with this object had conspicuously failed. It appeared impossible for strangers to track the dacoits in those mountain fastnesses. Whether

individually or collectively the hill robbers were as difficult to catch as is the proverbial eel. They seldom stayed to fight with their pursuers, although if brought to bay the dacoit was by no means without his share of Oriental courage and a certain esprit de corps which deterred him from disgracing even his miserable fraternity. But as a rule they preferred flight, and, as has been said, they were rarely caught either in gangs or individually. Most of the successful surprises of the dacoit bands of the Ghara Tal had taken place, indeed, near the scene of some of their depredations and when the robbers were far from the shelter of their hills.

The ravages committed by the outcasts were great, although for good and sufficient reasons they did not figure much in official reports. It would have been hardly to the credit of any official, whether civil or military, that the full extent of the operations of these audacious plunderers and murderers should have become known. "What would they say in England?" was the expressed or unexpressed thought uppermost in the official mind, and this consideration imposed caution and reticence.

There appeared to exist amongst the bands of dusky banditti much the same differences of disposition as were evinced by the wild beasts with whom they shared forest and jungle. Allusion has been made in an earlier portion of our story to the division in the tiger family. Ordinarily the great cat does not attack humanity unless in self-defence. But if hunger or any other cause impels it to slay man, woman, or child, from that time an abnormal desire for human blood is roused, and the "man-eater" never ceases to be one until a lucky bullet ends his sanguinary career.

Much the same differences existed between different bands of dacoits—nay, not unfrequently between individuals of the same troop. One gang (generally known by the name of its chief) would simply rob its victims, another almost invariably added murder to its crimes. Nearly all took prisoners—wealthy Europeans and natives to be held to ransom, native women as partners, and occasionally male children or adults for adoption into the troop or to serve as slaves.

They differed as widely in their ultimate treatment of the captives held to ransom when their expectations in that matter failed to be fulfilled—some liberated the prisoners, others kept them as slaves, and others again slew the unfortunates with tortures the most cruel and protracted.

At the entrance to a cave which formed the refuge of a band of these miscreants a man was lying on the evening of the day of which we speak, his sad eyes gazing wistfully at the sun-gilded tree-tops.

He was tall and strongly built, to judge by his broad shoulders, but his frame was spare, his long limbs attenuated almost to skin and bone, and his pale face emaciated and hollow.

An autumn beard of many weeks growth, and long, matted, curly hair of the same hue, gave the man the look of middle age, but a close observer would readily have discerned that he had, as a matter of fact, not yet left his youth behind him.

The man was evidently a European, and European also were his garments, but so torn and defaced by rough usage, and so stained by dirt and mud, that their original shape and hue were not easy to be arrived at.

The man's right arm and left ankle were swathed with rough bandages, as if they had been wounded, and the fact of his nationality coupled with an absence of weapons, or even of sash or belt in which to bestow them, went to prove that he was a prisoner.

If so man could scarcely have been in a safer dungeon. It is true no massive walls of huge stone blocks arose around him, no narrow, airless, unlighted cell walls met his melancholy eyes, no heavy fetters of iron encircled wrists and ankles.

He was free to drink in the cool evening air with every deep respiration which heaved his broad, deep chest. His steel-grey eyes might scan the blue heaven above, or the wooded land-

scape which stretched out before him. He was at liberty to walk as well as his weakness would permit through long aisles of caverns, opening the one from the other and honey-combing with their stoney burrows the heart of that part of the hill. All this he could do, but was none the less assuredly and hopelessly a prisoner.

The explanation is simple.

This long range of subterranean caves originated in a small circular, grotto-shaped chamber of rock situated far under the hill. From this central nucleus opened out a larger cave; from this again another still larger; from this last opened one of dimensions still more ample, until at length the series ended in the spacious and airy cavern where the prisoner was lying.

From the smooth stone floor of this, at the side opposite to that which led to the inner caves, the rock was scooped away by some gigantic exertion of natural force, so that a sheer precipitous descent of four hundred feet bounded the cave floor.

At a distance of about a score feet a similar wall of rock arose as upright and inaccessible, and behind this rose gently an incline of hilly ground covered with dwarf trees, amidst which towered proudly a few of larger stature.

The robbers' caves were thus cut off from the other part of the forest by the narrow gorge and rendered perfectly inaccessible save to enemies possessed of sufficient numbers and appliances to enable them to bridge the chasm.

At the bottom of the ravine could be heard the prattling of a small mountain rivulet, whose cheery babble was audible to the prisoner above.

The means of entrance to and exit from this mountain fastness were simple, but sufficiently ingenious. The straight trunk of a long pine had been split into a rude kind of plank. One end of this was pinned down to the edge of the stone floor of the cave by a long stake driven first through a hole in the end of the plank and then deep down into the rock. Upon this as a pivot the plank could be turned over the ravine until its free end rested upon the ground on the farther side of the chasm.

Rough ropes of coir or tree-bark were made fast to the free end of this peculiar Oriental drawbridge, and these being thrown across from the cavern enabled the men on the other side to aid in drawing the bridge to its position.

At present its rough, unwieldy length rested on the cavern side of the chasm, not far from the recumbent prisoner.

Although this first cave and even the one beyond it were well lighted naturally the more remote had to be artificially illuminated, and movingspecks of smoky light which occasionally passed to and fro in their darksome recesses showed that the torches from which they proceeded were being borne from place to place, and hence that the captive was not the only denizen of the place.

From the occasional harsh and high-pitched tones which echoed from these inner recesses it might be justly concluded that most if not all the inmates were women.

Presently a figure came forward bearing a torch. It was a Hindoo woman of the lower class, of middle-age, and a countenance remarkably repulsive—showing as it did the ineradicable traces of most of the evil passions of our nature. She was dressed in native costume, arms and ankles being circled by heavy silver bangles, and a "lotah" or brass water-vessel being carried in her left hand.

At the sound of her footsteps the prisoner turned himself with some difficulty into a position to see her.

As he did so the woman's face corrugated with hate and contempt. Then she spat with scornful action on the ground beside the man.

"Vile dog of a Feringhee!" she hissed. "Hearst thou aught?"

The question was couched in a miserable patois, consisting principally of a native dialect partly mixed with English.

The captive turned his steel-grey eyes up at the virago's angry countenance with a look of

scornful amusement as he shook his head carelessly.

His expression raised a tumult of wrath in the old woman's breast, which found vent in a perfect torrent of vituperation in Hindostanee and broken English.

"Can you not speak, dog?" she screamed, furiously. "Heard you any indication of our men's return?"

Again that calmly contemptuous smile, but this time the captive condescended to utter a negative in Hindostanee.

"It is well for you," the woman snarled, little mollified by the curt reply. "If we do not soon hear of ransom then you shall pay for all. Do you hear, Feringhee—Englishman?—you shall pay for all!"

"I hear," was the laconic reply, still in the native vernacular.

"Yes, you shall pay for all! And I, too, will have my share of revenge. How I hate you and all your pale-faced race! The curse of Siva, the Destrages, be upon you one and all. Shall we not rise again in our strength and hurl you all back to the unholy sea from which you came?"

"If we are ever driven from India it will not be by dacoit robbers, old woman," replied the Englishman, with exasperating coolness.

The disparaging epithet aroused the belated anew.

"Robbers!" she yelled; "and who made us robbers? Who but you and your like—a swarm of hungry, white-faced locusts, who have eaten and drunk up all that should sustain the dark sons of the soil, whose own and whose right it is? And can we not—dacoits as we may be—aid our countrymen to drive you out? If we cannot do it in fair field of war we can at least lessen your pestilent numbers. We can slay one here, one there. Sometimes we can kill many, some in the onslaught, some after—by torture. Do you hear?—by torture! Shall I show you the spot which testifies to our ability to lesson your hated numbers? Do you not know the narrow, well-like hole that leads from the floor of the farthestmost cavern? Ha! ha! I see you have heard the tale."

And indeed a rapidly flitting expression of horror passed momentarily over the captive's face, which he endeavoured to avert that the woman might not note his weakness.

"Yes, I see you know the tale," she cried, tauntingly. "Ah! the English are very brave at facing death when he comes to them openly, but they are children when he comes in darkness and silence and with long-drawn-out pain to be borne alone. They are even sometimes brave under torture, but only so long as they can see the light and breathe the air, when—"

"Cease, ill-omened screech-owl!" cried the man, angrily. "Leave me in peace, or thy master shall know of this!"

"Ha! ha! You cannot but choose to hear, Feringhee. Many a tale could I tell you of men of your colour who had borne all we could do, but when we thrust their mutilated bodies through that narrow hole and they fell in the pit and we held the torch in that they might see they stood on the bodies of those who had preceded them, young and old, men and women, some who had turned to skeletons and some who had breathed but a few short days before. Then when they realised where they lay and what was around them gave way at last. Ay, slave, strong, brave men have sent up shrieks like frightened women as we withdrew the torch and rolled to the entrance the closing stone. Does the picture please you?"

Just at the climax of the vengeful beldame's triumphant outburst a woman's voice calling to her from the inner cave caused her welcome disappearance. The captive fell back in an attitude of deep dejection and shuddered as a vivid imagination, acting on a frame weakened by sickness, caused him to realise with harrowing distinctness the horrible picture which the woman had drawn.

But this mood did not long continue. Abiding faith in Providence strengthened the prisoner. In place of the repulsive picture arose visions of past happiness, and a happy smile came at last to the pale lips which were murmuring softly

one word over and over as if its sound was music. It was "Miranda."

(To be Continued.)

FACETIÆ.

KEEP WITHOUT COST.—Maintaining a paradox. Punch.

THE London fog season has fairly commenced by Michaelmas Day. "Nice game the weather's playing," remarked the Astronomer Royal, "but it's seasonable and appropriate." "What game?" asked his assistant. "Why—at Michaelmas—don't you see—fogs and goose," replied star-gazer, chuckling, and then left the observatory, where he makes all his most star-telling observations. Punch.

GOOD QUARTERS FOR A DOG.—A "liver"-y stable. Judy.

ODD.

IN connection with affairs in Turkey, it sounds confusingly when we have to say that the sultan Aziz is the sultan as was. Judy.

A PARADOX.

STRANGE though it may seem, it is not less true that a man may be on very good terms with himself, and yet not know himself. Judy.

A POSSIBLE IMPOSSIBILITY.

CISS: "Do you want that apple, Tom?"
TOM: "Yes, I'm going to keep it myself and give it away." Judy.

YAH!

OF course such a thing could never, never be, but supposing, say, a military man could be a coward, which of the officers in a regiment would you expect to be the most chicken-hearted?—Why, the (h)ensign, to be sure. Judy.

DOMESTIC.

TRAIN up your children in the way they should go. Ergo, children ought to rise with the lark, but they should not disturb their parents with their larking. Judy.

FAIR (?) TRADE.

SMALL GIRL (to shopkeeper): "Ha'porth of nuts, please—to sell again, please." Judy.

PROPER PRIDE.

WHAT precious stone would a turbot mention, if he were a talking fish, on being goaded by detractors into an access of self-assertion?—A brill-i-a-nt. Fun.

IF it wasn't for thieves, lawyers would starve; if it wasn't for publicans, magistrates would sit twiddling their fingers; and if it hadn't been for women, pawnbroking would have been long ere this a defunct trade, and the pawnbroker an extinct creation. Fun.

FORGOTTEN.

My own love, my first love,
Excuse my heart's fatuity!
I am sad, my lost love,
Without your contiguity.
My old pipe, my last love,
Whatever had besotten me,
To go away from home, love,
And found that I'd forgotten thee!

Fun.

TELL ME WHAT IS SHORT-HORN BREAD?

WHAT are pure bred short-horns? Surely it would be equally reasonable to talk of "whole-meal beef." Fun.

THERE'S many a man who never knows what a real wash is till he has to pay twopence for it at a railway station. Fun.

A FOOTBOARD.—A clog. Moonshine.

A TRUST DEED.—An I.O.U. Moonshine.

THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE.—Bigamy. Moonshine.

PUBLIC WORKS.—Penny novels. Moonshine.

A WELL-KNOWN WATCHWORD.—Tick. Moonshine.

A THEATRICAL CON.

WHY are swells like horses?—Because they sleep in stalls. Moonshine.

EMERGENCY MEN.—Firemen. Moonshine.

KILLING TIME.—Shooting a second. Moonshine.

THE CREAM OF SOCIETY.—Dorsetshire. Moonshine.

THE "MAIN TRUNK."—The captain's log. Moonshine.

TEMPORARY INSANITY.—Trying to kill time. Moonshine.

"I'm crowing old and feeble," as the aged weather-cock scraped when it sadly wanted seeing to. Moonshine.

THE potato is an anomaly—the more it is skinned the "skinnier" it gets. Moonshine.

THE INNOCENT AT THE LEATHER TRADES EXHIBITION.

WHICH is the side of the animal utilised for its hide—its outs-hide or its ins-hide?

As America turns out imitation leather made from pinewood chips, is it not more true than ever that there is a deal in leather?

Do black and tan terriers obtain their "tan" from their own bark?

Are the "butts" obtained from the "butt ends" of the animals? (i.e., their heads, of course).

Does the successful exhibitor get a "leather medal" for his pains?

Is the charge for admission to this Leather Exhibition to be reckoned by "tanners"?

Is it true that the kitchen from which the refreshments are supplied have the accommodation of leather dressers?

Why were no samples exhibited of the production so identified with the Agricultural Hall at Cattle Show time—the country Jo-skin?

Funny Folks.

"TEST" TESTIMONY.

WE don't like all this talk in Ireland about "test" cases for the Land Commission. The end of it will be, we fear, that everyone will approach business with a "testy" temper. Should the Act prove equal to all the tests, though, it will be a "test"-imony to its excellence, and its authors will deserve a test-imonial. Funny Folks.

DIE-RECT EVIDENCE.

DR. TANNER has written to a Pennsylvania paper denying that he died at Amsterdam, or anywhere else. This is conclusive; and Mr. O'Bull suggests that we should never believe the report of anyone's death till we hear it confirmed from his own lips. Funny Folks.

WHAT IS NEEDED IN OUR POLICE COURTS.—The abolition of the Purchase system. Funny Folks.

NOTEWORTHY.

"THE elections for the Assembly of Notables in Egypt will be held shortly." As they sit on divans they will not only be an assembly of notables, but also of no chairs. Funny Folks.

AN EARTH-QUAKE.—The sensation experienced by generally-threatened landlordism. Funny Folks.

THE SALVATIONIST'S APPEAL.—"Am I not a man and a Booth-er?" Funny Folks.

A PLAINT.

"Oh! pity me, friends," cried a practical wife,

"My husband's romance is the plague of my life." Fun.

THAT'S THE WEIGH TO DO IT!

AN enterprising shoemaker has bought a weighing chair and placed it in his shop; and his announcement now reads, "Boots soled and heeled whilst you wait." This man is evidently resolved to do things on a liberal "scale." Fun.

THERE is no rule without an exception. It is generally believed that union is strength; but you try the union of brandy-and-water and you will discover—the more union the less strength.

Judy.

"USEFUL and pleasant," as the little boy said when he had finished his brimstone and treacle.

"I AM going to raise your rent, Mr. Hardup," exclaimed that gentleman's landlord the other day. "I'm very much obliged, I'm sure," replied Hardup, "I've been trying for some days but I can't raise it myself."

Judy.

Most blacksmiths are forgers; it would not, nevertheless, be right to say that they are thieves because they nail shoes.

Judy.

GONE OFF.

"MY revolver went off last evening, Tom, although it was not loaded."

"Gracious goodness! What caused that? The intense heat, I suppose?"

"No, I think it was the young man our servant is keeping company with. I understand she had him in to supper, and as my pistol is silver mounted, probably he thought it would make a pretty souvenir of a pleasant evening."

Judy.

"SOUND" INVESTMENTS.—Those in telephones.

Judy.

QUITE THE OLD "STYLE."—Billings—"gate."

Fun.

NOT TO BE SWALLOWED.

THE ironworkers and the ironmasters are at loggerheads again. The latter having determined to blow out a sixth of their furnaces, the former have determined to avert the blow by working only four days a week. Really, these operatives are never satisfied. One would have thought that if anything would please them it would be a good "blow out."

Funny Folks.

NOT SO MUCH A-MISS.

WHAT is the difference between a young lady who makes a "mysterious disappearance" and another who joins the Shakers?—One is a missing girl, and the other a Girling miss.

Funny Folks.

GOOD OCCUPATION FOR MISERS.—Burying "dead gold."

Funny Folks.

AN Irish gentleman says the chief pleasure in kissing a pretty girl is when she won't let you.

A BOND OF FATE. A NEW NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"A Winsome Wife," "So Fair Her Face," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXII.

CUPID'S VICTIM.

This senior junior, giant dwarf, Dan Cupid, Regent of love rhymes, lord of folded arms, The appointed sovereign of sighs and groans, Liege of all loiterers and malcontents."

CHESTER DALTON went out from the presence of his lady-love full of all sorts of vows to do all she had asked him and more. It seemed a small thing to find out all about a man. He would not rest till he had accomplished his task, and then when he went to Miss Esmond with his information—ah, then! She had not said in so many words that he might ask what he would and have it, but she had implied it, and he would ask.

He would take that gloriously-shaped hand and ask her to put it in his at the altar, to be his wife, the mistress of the old house at home,

to which his mother was anxious he should bring a suitable wife and a loving daughter to help to cheer her loneliness.

He did not stop to think whether that loving mother would consider the American heiress, with her doubtful antecedents and her very pronounced style, exactly the sort of woman for her son to marry. He expected everyone to look at Kathleen with his eyes, and the flaw that lay deep in the heart of his jewel was invisible to his eyes as yet.

"My mother will love you dearly," he said to her one day, when he had been bold enough to hint at his wishes; and she had called him a silly boy and told him that she was not at all the sort of woman that men's mothers liked and bade him forget what he had said there and then.

She knew he would not, and that he would return to the subject as surely as he lived and breathed, and he had come back to it and stuck to it with a pertinacity that had seemed to win, though really he had been led on in the way Kathleen Esmond knew so well how to employ.

He never thought there could be anything suspicious in her eagerness to learn all about this Paul Geldart. If he had a theory at all on the subject it was that the man was someone she had known in the wild life she was fond of talking about sometimes in a naive kind of way that was very amusing from its well-assumed simplicity.

It was funny to hear Miss Esmond—all ablaze with diamonds and trailing her satin dress half way across her splendid drawing-room—talk about boiling potatoes for mining pioneers and living under canvas while a town grew up around the place and the tide of emigration set towards it till it became a prosperous city.

She did not tell these stories when anyone who knew North America chanced to be present; she contented herself with acquiescing in all that other people laid down; she did not care to brag, she said. It was only to her most intimate friends that she talked freely about her former adventures.

Kathleen sat herself down to think after she had got rid of her guests and dismissed her maid. She was very independent, that young person declared; she was not like the ladies she had been in service with, who could not even put on their own shoes.

Miss Esmond would take it into her head to dress her own hair, and drive Suzette—as she chose to call herself, though she had been christened plain Susan—to the verge of desperation by producing an effect which she could not accomplish with all her well-taught skill.

"I am going mad," Miss Esmond soliloquised, "I must be, and yet there could be no mistake—a man with the scar of a fish's bite is not so common a person. Paul Geldart! Bah! I have no cause to fear, it is a fancy, a coincidence; nothing can harm me—not a dozen Paul Geldarts, each with a story in their mouths."

She rested her head wearily on her hands, her magnificent hair falling round her like a veil and glistening in the light of the bright fire. She was southern in her temperament and dearly loved warmth, and the flickering flame showed her face, drawn and haggard. All her aids to beauty were put away now, and though her features retained their matchless contour it was an old-lined face, looking ten years in advance of her real age, that was turned to the bright grate.

"And I shall not be Kathleen Esmond long," she went on to herself, and there was no softening of her tone or thought as she said the words half aloud. "I shall have promised to 'love, honour and obey' that boy—for he is a boy—before many months are over. I must marry someone, I can see that. I must have the protection of a husband's name, and his will do as well as any. Women will receive Mrs. Dalton when they won't have anything to do with a Miss Esmond, sprung from no one knows where, and with Yankee gutter blood in her veins for all they know. When I rule in Chester Dalton's mother's place Paul Geldart may do his worst. I defy him!"

If Chester, poor infatuated lad, could have

seen her then he would never have spoken the words that were going to give his mother so much pain; but he only saw her at her best, not always dressed in smiles and gay as she was wont to be to her guests, for he had been taken into her confidence.

She would put her hand on his shoulder and tell him how hard she found the world, how censorious, and how lonely she was, till his sympathy cheered her, till he was besotted and bewitched with the passion that possessed him and ready to go straight to destruction for her sweet sake.

He did not set about what she had asked him blunderingly. He knew enough of Mr. Pemberton to feel sure that he would resent anything like direct questioning, so he made errands to the Garden House for articles which he declared he fancied, and kept his eyes and ears open.

In a very short time he was able to go to Kathleen with the intelligence that very little was known about Paul Geldart by anyone in Mr. Pemberton's neighbourhood. He did not live at the Garden House, though he was much there, and the bric-à-brac dealer was supposed to be finding him employment of some sort. His little boy was at school, but was often seen at the house with his father.

This was all, and the knowledge was arrived at without anyone knowing that Mr. Dalton was inquiring for anyone else. He was very nearly discovered one day, when, as he was talking to Mr. Pemberton, Harold Carr Molyneux walked in.

He had grown very intimate with the master of the Garden House of late, and had made business there which did not quite blind that gentleman. It was to see Lilian that he went, and sometimes his longing was rewarded with a sight of her.

It was all harmless. It was only the sight of her he craved for, and even her husband could not begrudge him that, but there was a sinful pleasure at his heart when he noticed, as he soon came to do, that her face flushed at the touch of his hand and the sound of his voice.

Poor Lilian! With a morose, fractious husband at home and no one to speak to it was a relief from the dulness of her life to have this handsome, pleasant-spoken man, who never said a word to her that Adrian might not have heard, talk to her in his desultory fashion of what was passing in the world outside.

She had no thought of wrong, and Adrian was very cross sometimes—not actually with her, but made so by circumstances. He was discontented with his lot, and chafed miserably against the fact which was all too patent now—that he would never be a strong, hale man again.

He was not aware generally of his fractiousness, and when it was shown him that he was peevish and unreasonable no one could be more penitent or angry with himself than he. But his humours made Lilian's life lonely, and but for her boy she would have found her daily existence a very sunless one.

Harold Carr Molyneux knew where to touch her. On the subject of her boy she would wax eloquent when nothing else would unseal her lips, though she would accept nothing at his hands even for that young idol.

Adrian peevishly refused to see him, or anyone else that belonged to his former life; it might have been better perhaps if he had put aside the false delicacy that made him shrink from being seen. But Lilian always told him when she had seen any of the Falcons or anyone whom he had known in those days of madness.

Neither of them guessed—how should they?—at the wild passion that was devouring Harold Carr Molyneux, or how he cursed himself for his folly every time he allowed himself to be tempted into going to the Garden House.

It was like a glimpse of Heaven to him to stand in the presence of that pale, fair creature, with the feathery golden hair and the great lustrous eyes, and to dream of what might perhaps have been had things come about differently.

Lilian was paler and more ethereal looking

than of yore. She was quite well, she said, when Mr. Pemberton questioned her on the subject, but she had many things to worry her of which she did not speak to her kind benefactor.

She was sitting in the inner room where Mr. Carr had seen her so long ago now on one of the days when Chester Dalton made his appearance intent on finding out anything that was to be told about Paul Geldart.

There was nothing private in what was said, and she listened without thinking till Mr. Carr Molyneux's voice broke in on the conversation. She did not know he was there, and she sighed a little sigh of regretful remembrance as the full, soft tones fell upon her ear.

Mr. Pemberton went away for a minute or two to get something that was wanting, and the elder man spoke in a more serious tone to his companion.

"Look here, young one, you are making a mistake," he said.

"How?"

"In what you are going to do."

"Who knows what I am going to do?" the young man asked, colouring furiously. "What do you mean?"

"You know well enough, dear boy, or you must be like the ostrich that hides its head in the sand and fancies no one can see its body. Your fancied happiness is too big to be hidden, lad; don't look angry at me, I don't want to pry into your affairs too closely, but for the sake of your mother and your own good name look before you leap."

"I don't understand you."

"Oh, yes, you do. Take what I say in good part, and think twice before you put a woman like Kathleen Esmond in your mother's place. She's not worthy to be held in such honour—she is not fit to be any good man's wife, Dalton."

"It's so easy to say that," Chester Dalton said, with a sneer. "Everybody to whom my darling—for she is mine—has said 'No' belies her now and tries to make me think she is a wicked woman. Of course I know what your malice means; she has preferred me and you—"

"Would not marry her if she could bring me the mines of Golconda for her dowry. Do you think so meanly of me as to believe I would willingly slander a woman? Find out what her past life has been and then marry her if you can."

"I know it all, every part of it. I don't despise her, poor dear, because she has not been brought up in the fashionable world. I like to hear her talk of those days."

"I have no doubt you do, and very pretty talk it is. Miss Esmond knows how to weave a very interesting romance; she does not do it to me now."

He could not help smiling to hear the infatuated young fellow talking of Kathleen Esmond as "poor dear," and putting such implicit faith in all she said.

"She has bewitched you, that's certain," Harold Carr Molyneux said, "and I hope for your sake, dear boy, that the witchery will come to an end in time. You'll understand then that I have spoken only for your good."

"I daresay you mean well," Chester Dalton replied, gravely; he was not vindictive, and though he was vexed he would not nurse his resentment. "But the witchery will never cease for me till my life ceases with it."

"Heaven help you then," was Mr. Molyneux's inward comment on this speech; but he said no more, and Chester Dalton presently went his way, and Mr. Pemberton came down from the upper regions where he had been seeking something that was wanted.

To the astonishment of both men Lillian made her appearance in the outer room, a thing she rarely did unbidden, and stood before Mr. Molyneux with a pale face and excited eyes.

"May I speak to you?" she said, "just for a moment?"

And she laid her hand on his arm, thrilling him through with her light touch, and making him feel that he could lay down his life if need be to serve her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SECRET.

Diseases, desperate grown,
By desperate appliances are relieved,
Or not at all.

"I AM quite at your service, Mrs. Carmichael." Harold Carr Molyneux took the hand that Lillian had laid upon his arm and held it in his own. It was trembling as if she were half afraid of what she was going to do, and for a moment she hardly seemed to know how to begin what she was going to say. Could she have guessed what was passing in the heart that was beating so close to her own, as he held her hand and waited for her to speak, she would have had more difficulty still in speaking to him.

"What can I do for you?" he asked, when Mr. Pemberton had discreetly withdrawn out of earshot, wondering perhaps a little at his usually timid and retiring lace-mender. "There is something I see. Tell me what service I can render you and I shall only be too happy."

"Nothing for myself," she said, finding her tongue and forgetting in her excitement that her hand was still held in a clasp that certainly was not business-like. "It is for him, Mr. Dalton—save him if you can!"

"Do you think he stands in need of any salvation of mine?"

"He is going to marry Miss Esmond, is he not?"

"He thinks so."

"Stop it, Mr. Molyneux; stop it by any means you can invent—no matter how cruel. He will go straight to his ruin if ever he stands at the altar with her. She is not a fit woman to be an honest man's wife."

"I know that," he replied, quietly. "I think I have measured Miss Esmond up pretty correctly. But the boy is of age—unfortunately his own master—and, save for this bit of lunacy, of sound mind as far as I know. Falling in love with a woman who is not worthy of him is not sufficient proof of aberration of intellect to justify a man's friends in shutting him up in a lunatic asylum. He is mad enough on this point, poor fellow."

"He must not marry her, Mr. Molyneux—he cannot."

"Cannot! Why?"

"Because it would ruin his whole life—make him unhappy to the day of his death. Oh, I wish I could prove what I know to be as certain as that I am talking to you at this moment. Plead with your friend, do anything that will make him break off this match, and he will bless you by-and-bye as his greatest benefactor. It would kill his mother if she is a pure, good lady to have that woman taken to her for a daughter."

She was so excited that she was a little incoherent, and he made her sit down and calm herself.

"Do not fear to speak plainly to me," he said, gently. "Tell me all you know and I will do my best in whatever way I can to stop Chester Dalton from making such a fool of himself as he has made up his mind to do. Do not fear that I shall ever betray your confidence."

"I will confide in you," Lillian said. "I am afraid of that woman, Mr. Carr Molyneux; there is murder in her eyes whenever she looks at me, and if she thought that I had found out what she keeps so secret I think she would find the means to do me mischief. I think I have got nervous lately," she added, with a little laugh. "Adrian's nerves are all unstrung, and in trying to soothe him I think I have caught a little of the complaint. It is infectious, they say."

"Nothing more so; but have no fear, your nerves shall have no shock through me. I will be cautious itself. Give me some clue to how I can stop poor Dalton's folly and I will be more grateful than I call tell you."

He would have given his life almost to have drawn her into his arms and ask her for her secret, whatever it was, with her head resting on his breast and her sweet eyes looking up into his face. But it must not be. She was Mrs. Carmichael, and she had a communication to make to him, that was all.

So he kept command over himself, and only held her hand and bade her go on without fear, and she said a few words to him in a low tone that made him start from his seat in excitement with a glad cry.

"The boy is safe if that is true," he said. "But how can I find out?"

"I don't know," she answered, gravely. "I am sure of it. I came upon the knowledge the very evening on which I met you first, Mr. Molyneux."

"Ah, you recollect that evening."

"Do I not! It was a very pleasant one, in spite of Miss Esmond's displeasure, and she was very much displeased with me, I can assure you."

"What for?"

"She accused me of trying to monopolise the attentions of her guests, and she reminded me that I had forgotten my station in very plain terms indeed afterwards."

"She is singularly spiteful for a sensible woman," Mr. Carr Molyneux said, with a smile, "and she does not love me. Now she has determined to marry Dalton in spite of me, and I don't intend her to do anything of the sort. You have given me a formidable weapon, Mrs. Carmichael. With a little judicious use of it I think I can come between that young fool and his folly."

"Have I done right, I wonder?" Lillian asked herself, as she watched him walk away. "I have no business with Miss Esmond and her wicked secrets, and yet the misery that such a marriage would cause must be my excuse for telling what I am not supposed to know. Mr. Dalton was very kind to Adrian, though in a somewhat clumsy fashion, and he shall not be ruined if I can help it."

She sighed as she mentioned her husband's name. Her life had been very trying for the past few weeks. Adrian was in that irritable state, both mentally and bodily, that the world went wrong every way with him, and it was upon Lillian that the brunt of his disagreeable frame of mind fell. Mr. Pemberton had been very kind. He had seen the mischief, and took perhaps the best way to remedy it. He began by sending Adrian on all sorts of confidential messages about London and the suburbs, taking care that there should be nothing to wound his feelings in what he did. He was out to-day—Lillian knew that—and she did not expect him to return till quite late in the evening.

She went home when her work at the Garden House was finished and put things in order for her husband with a curious sinking and despondent feeling at her heart. She could not shake it off, try as she would, and she attributed it to the talk she had had with Harold Carr Molyneux.

"I must not see him again," she said to herself, "nor anyone that can bring the past back to me as he does. I thought myself stronger than I am. I do hanker after the things that are gone by. I can feel it when I am brought in contact with the old faces and hear the old voices. I do not wonder at Adrian, poor fellow. Where can he be, I wonder?"

She sat dreamily thinking of all sorts of things till the clock struck an hour that startled her out of her reverie and filled her with a vague terror. Where could Adrian be? Mr. Pemberton had never given him anything to do to keep him out so late before, and with a sick horror of she scarce knew what curdling her blood almost, and making her feel cold and sick, she put on her hat and ran round to the Garden House.

Andrew let her in, astonished at her pale face and excited manner. He asked her no questions—it was not his business to do so—but showed her straight into his master's private room.

Mr. Pemberton looked up in surprise.

"Well, my dear," he said, "is Adrian too tired to come out? Why did he not come here first? I suppose he has sent you with the message from Chelsea."

"Sent me! He has not come back. I came to see if he was here. It is so late."

"Not come back?"

"No."

"Wherever can he be? Ah! don't look so frightened, my dear. He has come to no harm. Half-past ten is not a late hour for a gentleman to stay out, and it is hardly that, I think."

In his heart Mr. Pemberton thought it was very late under the circumstances, and was by no means free from alarm. He had sent Adrian on a very confidential errand, and he expected him to bring home a valuable emerald ring from a lady customer, to whom it had been sent. He had been gone many hours longer than was necessary, and he was generally exceedingly punctual in matters of business.

"Don't cry, child," he said, as Lillian, worn out and terrified, burst into hysterical tears. "There is nothing the matter. He has forgotten that he has anything of importance about him and has turned in somewhere for an hour's amusement. We shall find there is nothing worse than that when the hour comes for the theatres to close."

"He would not do such a thing as that," Lillian said.

And Mr. Pemberton knew she spoke truly. Adrian was not at all the sort of man to amuse himself in that way, and to tell the truth his heart sank almost as low as poor Lillian's did with a nameless fear.

He sent Andrew to tell her landlady where she was, and kept her at his house till the very latest of the theatres had had time to empty itself, and allowed time after that for any reasonable delay on Adrian's part, and then he was obliged to confess that it looked very strange and to admit that he too was alarmed.

"He has been murdered perhaps while we have been sitting here!" Lillian said, wildly. "What can I do? Where can I go?"

"To bed, my dear," Mr. Pemberton said, quietly. "It would be the best thing; but I suppose you could not sleep, and it would seem like cruelty to press you to do so. It will be all right in the morning. People are not so readily lost in London as the newspapers would have us believe. We shall hear all about it when he comes home in the morning and laugh at our fears of to-night when we hear his explanation."

Lilian could see no hope, and Mr. Pemberton thought of his emerald ring and was very anxious. They sat up all night, and Andrew made coffee and brought it to them with all the deftness of an old servant, and the morning broke, cold and dark, with rain plashing drearily down on the pavement, and out-door London woke to a draggled life in the soaking streets, and still there was no sign of Adrian Carmichael.

"Please, sir, you are wanted."

The speaker was Mr. Reginald Carr Molyneux's own man, who had been bidden to go about his business and leave his master alone for half-an-hour in his dressing-room. He had risen early to get back to Hazeldean by a fast morning train, and he was meditating over a cup of coffee on the extreme discomfort of early rising anywhere but at home. There he could wander about as he liked in the most negligent of costumes. Here he—

"Oh! come in. What is it? I told you not to bother me."

"Yes, sir, I know, but it's Mr. Molyneux's own man, if you please, sir, and—"

"And what does he want at eight in the morning? His master isn't here."

"No, sir. He's at home—gone mad."

"What?"

"That's what he says, sir, and he says will you please come. He can do nothing with him."

Mr. Carr looked at the man as if he thought he was the madman for whom he was wanted, and certainly the statement was a curious one. He had parted with his cousin on the previous evening, and beyond remarking that he was a little pale and distraught, there did not seem to be anything the matter with him. They had been talking of various things that they both meant to do, and he had thought to himself that Harold was getting more settled in his habits and more like what he used to be before the strange passion for the woman who was now

Mrs. Carmichael had unsettled him so. He had asked him if he were ill on remarking his paleness and Harold replied that he did not think he was very well. His head ached a good deal, and he should go home and get to bed early.

"I've been having too many club evenings," he said, "that's all. 'Ta-ta, Rex. I'll see you to-morrow. Ah! no, you are going—I remember. Au revoir, then, till next week."

It was somewhat startling to be told that his cousin had gone mad after such a matter-of-fact parting so recently, and he ordered the man to be shown up that he might hear from his own lips what it all meant.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MISSING.

For 'tis a truth well known to most
That whatsoever thing is lost,
We seek it ere it come to light
In every cranny but the right.

"Missing!" A word of terrible significance, embodying what of hopes and fears, of agonising suspense and terrible despair those only can tell who have lost friends in the mysterious way that so often breaks hearts and brings ruin on households and leaves no trace to tell what has become of the bread-winner, or the wife, or the loving daughter maybe, who has suddenly and silently vanished, to be seen no more till the darkness of death is passed and the light of the next world makes everything clear to the mourners who have gone down with sorrow to the grave.

Lilian Carmichael had read advertisements headed "Missing" in many a daily paper, and the seemingly wonderful stories of men and women who had walked quietly out of the ken of all belonging to them in going as it seemed to their daily work, and she had looked upon the tales as rather apocryphal, and had a floating idea that there was more talk than reality in them.

She came to know, poor girl, how terribly real such sorrowing suspense can be when the next day came and there was no sign of Adrian. Mr. Pemberton did not conceal from her that he was very anxious too. There was nothing to keep Mr. Carmichael away, and he was usually so very punctual in all his business transactions.

Andrew was despatched to inquire whether he had been at the place where he was to take the emerald ring. The answer was alarming. He had received his message, which was one of some importance to Mr. Pemberton, and had left with the ring in his possession, saying he was going straight back to the Garden House, and that the lady should have an answer from Mr. Pemberton that same night. She had seen nothing of Mr. Carmichael since, nor received any message, and she was going to start for Bloomsbury herself when Andrew arrived at her house.

But that Adrian had been employed by his friend to take things ten times more valuable than even that costly emerald ring to his various customers Mr. Pemberton would almost have doubted whether he had not been tempted to take it and carve out a future for himself somewhere else.

He had seen, though Lillian had not said a word to him, how Adrian chafed at his life, and how even the faithful devotion of his wife seemed to pall upon him; and he had been thinking for some time past how he could manage to give him an entire change of work and scene, so that his mind and body both might recover tone and strength.

It was for Lillian's sake he did it all. In his inmost heart he did not like Adrian; at least, not personally. He found him very useful and he was sorry for him, but he saw how selfish he unintentionally was, and how he repined and fretted while his wife worked cheerfully and constantly to keep their home as it should be.

If Lillian ever repined she did not show it. She was always uniformly cheerful and happy—a little pale and thoughtful of late, Mr. Pem-

berton fancied; but the season had been busy and London was hot. She should go away to the sea-side after a bit and rest.

He sympathised with her most sincerely in her distress about Adrian, and wondered at the heroic way in which she concealed her trouble and went about her daily avocations till he bade her stop.

When the morning came and did not bring him she went home, saying she must have things ready for him and see to the baby, and he applauded her resolution.

"Fretting will not bring him any the quicker, my dear," the old man said, "and if anything has happened to him—though, mind, I don't believe anything has—he will be all the more comfortable when you get him home again for a clean house and a soft bed; besides, it will keep you from thinking. Ah! never mind the lace. I will find you something else to keep your fingers employed, and when Adrian comes back you can make up for lost time."

"When he comes back! Ah! but when will he come?" Lillian said, in a tone of sharp pain; and he answered her, almost sharply:

"He will come, never fear."

But when Andrew came home from his errand Mr. Pemberton was fain to confess himself alarmed. Still, the utmost he would admit was the possibility of Adrian having met with an accident and being in some hospital, from which he could be fetched at any moment.

Alas! This hope too was destined to fade like the others when every hospital in London had been visited and no trace of him discovered.

Not a word of any mishap in any of the papers, not a trace to tell where he might possibly have gone to, and the suspense seemed to Lillian as if it must kill her.

She wanted to rush off in search herself, and if it had not been for her boy in all probability she would have worn herself out in fruitless seeking and wandering. But the little fellow did not seem well; he was heavy and stupid, and she was too anxious about him to leave him, and the weary day wore on till night, and then Mr. Pemberton communicated with the police, who immediately placarded London with bills headed "Missing," and went their customary way happy in their own wisdom.

They could see nothing in the matter but an ordinary robbery and disappearance. This assistant of Mr. Pemberton's had a valuable ring about him and very likely wanted to get away. Somehow they worried out of either Andrew or his master that Mr. Carmichael was not too well contented with his life and they drew their own conclusions. They respected Mr. Pemberton's indignation when such a thing was hinted at, but they had their own opinions notwithstanding.

Nothing came of it all but a great deal of gossip and Lillian's breaking heart. There was a double sorrow on her, poor girl, for her baby was very ill. As the time went on the child grew worse; some teething disease, the doctor said, not at all uncommon. No, not to him, but a fresh agony to the desolate mother, whose all of life and hope in this world seemed to be slipping away from her with that little life.

She could not hope; she tried with all her might to see a ray of light in the darkness that was closing round her, and when at the end of a week there were no tidings of the man she had loved so dearly and suffered so much for—and she held in her arms her child and his, dying, for it had come to that—she might well be excused if she doubted the mercy of Heaven and felt tempted to "curse God and die," as the friend of Job recommended when his trouble grew too great for him to bear.

The baby never rallied—her little Adrian, her darling. Each day seemed to bring him nearer and nearer to the father whom she fully believed now had gone before him to "the world which sets this right," and when a week had passed and she had ceased to look for tidings of her lost husband the end came.

Mr. Pemberton let her alone. He did not intrude much on her sorrow, but he bade the woman of the house, who always lived there and



["YOU ARE MY CHILD AS LONG AS YOU ARE IN TROUBLE."]

took care of the portions that were unlet, see after her and take care that she wanted for nothing, nor the baby either.

"You are my child as long as you are in trouble," he said to her, as they stood together by the side of the little baby, who breathed better when he was laid on a couch than in his mother's arms. "Don't think yourself friendless as long as I live. Look your sorrow in the face, my dear, and remember whatever happens you have done a woman's duty by your loved ones."

He did not say that it was all for the best and bid her take the chastening of Heaven as a boon and a benefit. Who can when their hearts are wrung and their frame shaken by grief that there seems no reason for? It is afterwards—when time has softened the blow and the brain is clear, when the loved and lost can be thought of without blinding tears and passionate sobs—that Heaven's mercy and justice can be thought of and seen, and the loving hand recognised under the mailed glove.

Lilian could do nothing but suffer now, and when at length the struggle was over and her baby lay cold and still in her loving arms she fell into a merciful stupor so prolonged and death-like that Mr. Pemberton was alarmed and sent for the doctor.

"Let her alone," that gentleman said, "she has not slept for many nights, I suspect, and if she can be persuaded to take nourishment when she rouses she will be all the better for this. She is not fainting, but she must be carefully watched. Watching and care she would have if that would cure her, and the baby should be buried with all loving decorum. Mr. Pemberton would see to that."

It was not only in Bloomsbury that the story of Adrian Carmichael's disappearance made a sensation; it found its way to the Falcons and to Miss Esmond's drawing-room, and was discussed freely at both places. That the heiress was astonished to find that Mr. Pemberton's assistant and the man she had well-nigh ruined were one and the same person would be a very

simple way of expressing what she felt. She professed not to be at all surprised at his disappearance. It was quite impossible, she declared, for a man like him to remain in such a position long, to say nothing of his life with his wife, and she shrugged her shoulders as if she could say a great deal about that young person's temper and habits if she chose.

She never ventured on any abuse of Lilian before Lady Hester. There was nothing roused that long-suffering lady so much as any unkind words of Lilian, in whom she believed in spite of everything. Miss Esmond elected to go to Bloomsbury and question Mr. Pemberton for herself. She saw nothing of Lilian and was but coolly received. The bric-à-brac dealer would not stoop to curry favour with the very best of his customers. Yes, he told her, Mr. Carmichael had certainly disappeared and they were all very anxious; his wife was in great distress.

Miss Esmond playfully chid him for keeping the fact a secret from her that Adrian and his mysterious assistant were one and the same person. But he looked her straight in the face and replied that he wished to keep the secret from her above all people in the world. Then she tried him with offers of help for Mrs. Carmichael—if her husband was really dead—but Mr. Pemberton repulsed her more frigidly than ever and told her Lilian would be amply provided for.

"I am sorry you will not let me be of any use," she said, somewhat spitefully. "Both myself and Mr. Dalton would like to help her for the sake of our old acquaintance with her husband; he was one of the Falcons once, you know."

"Yes, I am aware of that fact," Mr. Pemberton said, "and they all seem to have liked him very much. Why should Mr. Dalton be associated with you in this matter more than any of the others?"

He knew very well why, but he wanted to hear the fact from her own lips. He had something to say to her.

"Because— But surely you have heard, Mr.

Pemberton—the papers have been making enough of it for the last few days."

"I don't read society papers, madame," he replied, quietly, "but I suppose you mean me to understand that you are going to marry Mr. Dalton."

"Exactly."

"And when? May I ask that much?"

"I can't tell you exactly. There is work for the lawyers, and I have much to settle before I can fix the day. It will not be long now. I dare say the world is calling me foolish for not taking one of the many men I might have had who seem better fitted for my husband. But we understand each other very well, Chester and I."

"You understand him, I daresay," was Mr. Pemberton's mental comment on her words, "I doubt if he has the same advantage over you."

He was not surprised at her talking thus confidentially to him; he had been taken into her confidence before now on many matters.

"May I give you a piece of honest advice, Miss Esmond?" he asked, after a pause.

"Certainly," she replied, looking at him just a little uneasily. "What is it?"

"Look before you leap."

"I don't think I understand you quite. If you mean make sure of the position of my future husband I have done that. It is a public matter what his position is."

"I was not thinking of him, but of you. There will be danger in your marrying him."

"Danger?"

"Yes."

"From what quarter?"

"I will show you."

He unlocked one of his wall cupboards, an innocent-looking receptacle that was really a fireproof safe, and took out two articles.

"I see you know them," he said. "When you are inclined to talk of your speedy marriage remember that these are in my possession, and that I know where they came from."

(To be Continued.)



[A DOUBTFUL ANSWER.]

LOVE'S REASON WHY.

A NOVELETTE.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

CHAPTER I.

REASON THE FIRST.

"It puzzles me what Lord Crawshaw can see in Lois Greville to keep ever at her side. Did you see him at the Wasonbys', and notice that nobody could get a word with him but Lois?"

Mrs. Arnold looked at her daughter Ella and smiled as she shook her head. Ella, a fine, tall blonde, sat by the open window, looking out upon the lawn of Aspland House, and as she spoke her eyes wandered from the leaves falling in clusters from the trees to the long white road leading to the town, just visible in the hazy distance.

"I have no patience with Lois," Ella Arnold continued, after a lapse of sulky silence. "She is as plain in her manner of speaking as I consider she is of face and figure."

"Do you intend to convey that Lois Greville says just what she means and no more or less?"

As Mrs. Arnold asked this question she placed some crevel work in a basket of Italian manufacture, and crossing the room sat down at her daughter's side.

"Ella," she said, "plain speaking is not a sin, unless it amounts to absolute vulgarity; but, my darling, there are many excuses to be made for Lois. Remember that she is an orphan in charge of self-made people, and—"

"I hate self-made people!" Ella exclaimed; "they are continually talking about their money, their fine furniture, and what everything costs."

"That is a failing with many, but not all," Mrs. Arnold observed, quietly. "Lois is a good,

sensible girl, but she has had her own way from childhood, and the freedom has imparted a certain wildness to her nature."

Ella Arnold curled her upper lip and laughed scornfully.

"Wild!" she echoed. "She romps with the village children as if she were one of them. She climbs banks for wild flowers, and does all sorts of odd things. Well, there is no accounting for tastes, and I say again I cannot understand what has captivated Lord Crawshaw. A deep-laid plot must have been laid for him, and I only hope that he will escape in time."

"Ella," said Mrs. Arnold, touching her daughter lightly on the shoulder, "it seems to me that your dislike to Lois is rather sudden. It comes to me as unexpected news. Tell me truly, are you jealous of her?"

Ella pouted her lips disdainfully as a negative, but nevertheless her face flushed crimson.

"I must own that Lord Crawshaw paid me some attention last shooting season," she said, after a pause. "The truth is out—I like him very much."

"You love him?"

"Yes; not for his wealth or title, but for himself alone."

"You astonish me," Mrs. Arnold said. "I have never heard a word of this confession from your lips before."

"Because I was waiting for him to speak," Ella responded, with a glowing face and fluttering bosom; "and just when I believe he would have done so Lois must take it into her head to step between us."

"And, pray, who has told you that she is engaged to Lord Crawshaw?"

"Nobody; but it is plain to anyone with eyes who cares to use them," Ella replied, in a piqued tone of voice. "I wish you had not asked her to stay with us for a week."

"You mean that you will find it hard to treat her with that friendship and affection you have felt for her in times gone by?"

"Not exactly that. I have sufficient control over myself, but I feel convinced that Lord

Crawshaw will find his way here before she has been under this roof many hours."

"That is probable," Mrs. Arnold said. "There will be nothing extraordinary in that. He comes often and is ever welcome. His father was the friend of yours. Both are dead, and it would ill become me were I to appear cold to Lord Crawshaw even if—"

Ella closed the window, partly because she was in a temper and partly because the air was getting chilly, and as she did so the avenue leading to the house was further darkened by a figure.

It was that of a girl about eighteen years old. She was slightly above the average height of young ladies of her age, rather slim, but graceful in every movement.

Look into her blue eyes one moment and you saw mirth and mischief, and the next determination approaching defiance. Her golden hair, blown about by the wind, had strayed over her ears and neck, forming a ragged, burnished halo round her head, and as she stopped when in sight of the house and in the full glow of the setting sun, Ella Arnold's opinion was partly substantiated.

Lois Greville was not beautiful. Some people would have called her anything but pretty, but the slight, delicate nose and sweetly-formed mouth acted as a good set-off against the slightly freckled face and high forehead, unhidden by the barbarous fringe adopted now-a-days.

Swinging her sunshade in an easy, careless manner, Lois Greville entered Aspland House, and was welcomed by Mrs. Arnold, who, having kissed her affectionately, gazed at her in astonishment.

"Why, child," she said, "surely you have not come here on foot across those lonely downs?"

"I have indeed," Lois replied, with a merry smile. "What was to hinder me? John is to come on with the few things I shall require. Walk! I delight in exercise on such a lovely day as this. On my way here I saw the birds clustering together and holding noisy consulta-

tion, perhaps as to the probabilities of a sharp winter; I saw trees tinted with red, gold and bronze, and I was foolish enough to loiter and gather some horribly common blackberries, and what is perhaps worse to eat them too. Oh! yes, I enjoyed myself far more thoroughly than I should have done squeezed up behind that fat pony with John for company. But where is Ella?"

Ella Arnold answered for herself by opening the door and entering the well-appointed drawing-room.

"How pale you are," Lois Greville cried, as she greeted her, "and paleness does not suit your style of beauty. I'll tell you what we will do to-morrow. We will take a run over to the woods and bring home a good basketful of nuts."

"I thought that tree climbing was an amusement reserved for boys," Ella Arnold said, as she cleared up some music which had been left about on the piano.

"There you go, snapping me up without a minute's notice," Lois returned, good-humouredly. "But it is just like people who live in the country and know nothing about it. Nuts grow on bushes, Ella, and no climbing is necessary. All we require is a stick with a crooked handle and down come clusters of dark green sheaths guarding russet brown filberts. Mrs. Arnold, I suppose I am to occupy my old room."

Scarcely had an affirmative been given than Lois Greville was tripping up the stairs, and soon returned when dinner was announced.

"Oh! by the way, Ella," said Lois, "I saw Charlie this morning."

"Charlie?"

"Lord Charles Crawshaw this morning," Lois said. "You called him Charlie in my hearing more than once last year. Well, never mind that. He is a good companion when one cannot get a better. He came round to our house adorned in true Nimrod fashion, and on hearing that I was going away he asked me where."

"Indeed," said Ella, carelessly, "and I presume you enlightened him?"

"Another little mistake," Lois replied, "I did no such thing. I placed all the household on their words of honour not to divulge the secret, and I regret to say that I told his most noble lordship a fib. I told him that I was going to Fairhurst, and, with a musical laugh, 'I hope I have put him on a wild goose chase.'"

Ella seemed to breathe more freely.

"She will tire him," was her thought and her hope.

"That was wrong, Lois," Mrs. Arnold said, in a tone of mild reproach, "it will make Lord Crawshaw very angry."

"And that will be a change for him," Lois returned, and her eyes danced with delight. "I am sure that Lord Crawshaw will be as well at Fairhurst as anywhere else. I dare say he will scold me. I wish he would, instead of standing before me and pulling that dark moustache as if he had not a word to say for himself. Ella knows how taciturn he is."

The colour flew into Ella Arnold's face, and an angry reply was on her lips, when a servant announced Lord Charles Crawshaw.

The three ladies looked at each other in surprise as his lordship, a tall, dark, handsome man of five-and-twenty, entered the room.

"I am sorry to disturb you," he said. "I was riding over to Fairhurst, but a storm is coming on and I did not want to ask myself whether Mrs. Arnold would give me shelter."

The light of the lamps had dazzled him for a moment, but as his vision cleared and he beheld Lois smiling at him in a mischievous fashion he started and looked as if undecided whether to laugh or frown.

"So," said he, "I owe my troubles to you, Miss Greville. Hark at the pattering of the rain and the roaring of the wind. Say you are sorry and I will forgive you."

"My lord is condescending," Lois replied. "How is he to tell that I have not taken shelter here from the conflicting elements? I would rather leave the explanation to Mrs. Arnold."

"Speak for yourself, little mischief maker," Mrs. Arnold said, "your eyes betray your demure

face. Lord Crawshaw, Lois confessed all before you came in. Have you dined?"

"No, and I must acknowledge that I am hungry," Lord Crawshaw replied, shaking his forefinger at Lois, who crossed her hands in a penitent fashion. "Take care, Miss Greville, that I don't give you a Roland for an Oliver."

Lois laughed, and that evening she avoided his lordship as much as possible, leaving him to Ella, who began to think that she had misjudged her visitor.

At ten o'clock Lord Crawshaw mounted horse and returned to his quarters at Wanstead, and soon after Lois, pleading fatigue, went to her room.

Then all the laughter died out of her eyes and tears filled them. She sat near the window with an open letter in her hand, but she had read it a dozen times before, and was thinking how the dismal night agreed with the weight at her own heart.

"Poor Jack!" she sighed, "will your troubles never come to an end? Ah! I love you in spite of all. Poor, poor Jack!"

Lois folded up the letter and looked at herself in the glass. She had been crying, and she made a little grimace as if ashamed of her weakness.

"A great wrong has been done," she said, "a very great wrong, but a woman's wit will yet prevail. Good night, Jack, and may God bless you and send you better times."

Nobody would have dreamed that Lois Greville had anything on her mind. She was up early the next morning, even before the servants, and out in the grounds feeding the birds with grain.

The morning air had brought roses to her cheeks, and Mrs. Arnold could not help seeing the contrast between her and Ella as they sat opposite to each other at the breakfast table.

Lois was full of spirits, and Ella, after her interview with Lord Crawshaw, was inclined to be agreeable. They had talked about old times, and his lordship had said as much that he felt it incumbent upon himself to settle as soon as he could find a suitable wife.

It was a bright and beautiful morning. The storm had passed away and left the sky clear, cloudless and serene, and the birds, perhaps deceiving themselves with the idea that spring had come again, sang blithely.

"Well, Ella," said Lois, "what do you say to our nutting expedition? You were rather cold about it last night."

"I was more afraid of the weather than anything else," Ella Arnold replied. "I will start when you are ready. But why are you so anxious to go on the first day of your visit?"

"I will be candid with you," Lois rejoined. "I am more anxious than ever, especially if I thought that Lord Crawshaw would take it into his head to call again to-day. It is said that I encourage him, but it is not true. He is often dangling about my heels—nice expression for a lady, is it not?—often when I wish he was a thousand miles away."

"You astonish me, Lois. I thought—"

"What others did and do," Lois Greville interrupted, "but banish it from your mind. If I ever marry at all the day is far distant. Believe me, Ella, that I have reasons for what I say, so ask no more questions, but put on your hat and let us get into the open air."

Ella Arnold was not a bad-hearted girl, and when she saw how earnest were the blue eyes looking steadfastly into hers she felt a little conscience-stricken and inclined to cry.

While she was getting ready for the walk who but Lord Crawshaw should come into the house.

"I have brought the open carriage and the bays with me, thinking that you and Ella might like a drive," he said. "Ah! Lois, you were nearly serving me a nice trick yesterday. When will you cease to torment me?"

"When the Crawshaws' escutcheon is hung out at Eaton Square," Lois replied.

"You wish to get rid of me?"

"Oh, dear no," Lois returned. "I prefer you to live."

"And yet you will not give me all I care to live for."

"And pray, Mr. Sentimental, what is that?"

"Your heart," Lord Crawshaw said, earnestly. "How often am I to tell you that I love you? How long will you keep me in suspense? Is there a reason?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

Lois held a tiny key in her hand and she laid it against her lips.

"You must take that for an answer now," she said. "The day will perhaps come when I may speak out, but— Here comes Ella. You may take the basket to the carriage and drive us as far as the woods, but there leave us, as we don't want anybody to hear our secrets while we are nutting, and I can assure you, Lord Crawshaw, that we have no end of things to talk about."

"When may I come to see you again?"

"This is not my house, Mr. Impertinence," Lois said, laughingly. "If it were I should turn the dogs loose and lock and bolt the doors against—"

"The man who loves you better than his life."

CHAPTER II.

SIR JOHN HALIWELL RECEIVES A VISITOR.

SIR JOHN HALIWELL firmly believed that the great motive power of the whole world was encompassed within the West End of London during the Parliamentary season. There was nothing whatever worth having or living for beyond that area when all the great people were in town, and he being a very great and wealthy man hugged himself with the idea that his opinion could not be contradicted.

Sir John was a widower and fifty-five years of age. He led a pompous and rather lonely life, seldom communicating or seeing any of his relatives. Lois Greville was his niece, and he had a wholesome dread of her, because, to use Mrs. Arnold's statement, that young lady had a quaint way of saying what she meant, and she often said what she meant about Sir John Halowell.

He was a bear, a dragon, a dog in the manger, and what not, and when it came to Sir John's ears that Lois had openly stated that his photograph was used in some families to frighten naughty children he was furious, and sending for Mr. Pyke, the solicitor, struck his niece out of his will.

But Lois only laughed when she heard of it, and said, "A wicked old man's money only brings misery," and forthwith wrote Sir John a letter on dainty cream-coloured paper, hoping that his attack of indigestion had not quite prostrated him.

Worse and worse. Sir John tore the note up and swore that if Lois ever stood at his door he would order it to be closed against her, and acquainted his niece with his intention, whereupon Lois joined issue with him and one morning early in the season sent up her card.

Sir John was suffering from an attack of the gout, and flew into a terrible rage with the footman who presented the slip of pasteboard, but before he could give any coherent instructions Lois marched into the room and banished the startled footman with one flash of her eyes.

With mingled feelings of rage and astonishment the old knight gazed at Lois, who brought a chair calmly to the table and sat facing him.

"How dare you come here?" Sir John Halowell gasped out, at last, and the effort cost him such a twinge of the gout that he fairly roared.

"How dare I come here?" Lois repeated, a little scornfully. "Pray, uncle, tell me what I have done to be ashamed of."

"I do not wish to discuss the matter with you," Sir John replied. "Is it not enough that I have requested you never to darken my doors again?"

"Enough for you perhaps, but not enough for me," Lois Greville replied. "Here I am and here I intend to stay until you explain your miserable and unnatural conduct. What have you done with your son Jack—dear Jack? Where is he, I ask? Ah! you may shake your

head at me and frown, but I'm not afraid of you, uncle."

"I should like to know what you are afraid of," Sir John Haliwell said.

"I am afraid of doing wrong, or of wrong being done," Lois replied, fixing her eyes on the old man's face, which was changing from red to white. "I want to know where Cousin Jack is, and if you will not tell me I must find out for myself."

"I have no son," Sir John said. "If he is not dead in body he is dead to me in heart."

"Oh! you bad—wicked—wretched old man!" Lois cried, with a tearful emphasis on each word. "How can you sit there and speak so heartlessly? I hate you—there! Do you hear? I hate you! When I was a little girl I used to sit on your knee and put my arms round your neck. I am sorry for it now."

"Miss Greville," Sir John Haliwell said, as calmly as possible, "I will thank you to put an end to this discussion without delay. My son disobeyed me, and he left the house of his own accord. There the matter rests. I know and wish to know nothing of him. And if I did why should I answer your questions? What are you to him, or he to you?"

"Is he not my cousin?" Lois said, as the colour mantled on her cheeks. "Is he not one of the best and dearest fellows? You ashamed of him! As I live, he has more reason to be ashamed of you!"

This was more than Sir John Haliwell could bear, and his hand moved towards the table bell.

"There is no occasion for you to summon your servants," Lois said, as she rose and drew herself up disdainfully. "I am going, Sir John, but before I say adieu I wish to tell you that Lois Greville will not rest until she knows the truth. You hold some secret connected with Jack; and I'll be bound that he is suffering under some great injustice."

So saying she bowed and swept haughtily out of the room, leaving Sir John Haliwell to fume and fret. But after a time his face assumed an anxious expression, and leaning his elbows upon the table he covered his face with his hands, and in that attitude his servant found him an hour after.

That night saw Lois Greville at Lady Le Marché's ball as merry as ever and apparently without a care in the world.

Lord Charles Crawshaw was there, and his eyes followed the graceful girl as she moved to and fro or stopped to chat with this gentleman or that lady, but she avoided him, and his lordship sighed and his thoughts were not with Ella Arnold who walked at his side.

"You seem dull and depressed," Ella Arnold said. "Listen! The band is beginning the 'Loved and Lost' waltz."

"Yes, indeed," Lord Charles Crawshaw said, waking up from a reverie. "'Loved and Lost.' Lord Mostyn is looking for you, Miss Arnold. He claims you for the waltz. Permit me to take you to him."

"There is some mistake," Ella replied, consulting her programme. "The space is vacant. Lord Mostyn dances with Lois Greville."

"Confound it!" Lord Crawshaw muttered. "Shall I never get a chance to speak to her?" And then aloud, "Miss Arnold, may I fill the waltz up with my name?"

"With pleasure."

Neither Lord Crawshaw's heart nor feet were in the dance. He was clumsy and awkward, and Ella Arnold was glad when the music came to an end.

At last Lord Charles Crawshaw made a bold resolve, and approaching Lois Greville, he said:

"Will you grant me the favour of your society for a few minutes?"

Lois elevated her eyebrows and laughed merrily.

"One would think that you were a boy just let loose from school—a little bashful, but determined to make yourself known at the risk of making yourself ridiculous," she said. "Are we such strangers, my lord, that you need plead for a few words?"

"I have been thinking that you avoided me," he said, gravely.

"If that is so it has been to save you and myself pain," she replied. "What shall we talk about? The season—the weather—the war—or even politics if you will. Take your choice out of the four, but—"

She shook her forefinger at him, and Lord Crawshaw saw the gleaming lights of the chandeliers merge into each other and dance madly round the room.

"You are cruel to me—very cruel, Lois," he said. "What have I done to deserve it? If to love you is a sin then heap reproaches upon my head. Will you never bid me hope? Will you never tell me that I may call you my wife one day?"

"I will tell you nothing," Lois replied. "My lord, I have already told you that I have good reasons for what may appear to you and many bad taste."

"Is your heart fixed elsewhere?"

"Yes, at present—ay, my very heart and soul!"

Sad and downcast he left her, and soon after he ordered his carriage and was driven away to home and bed to pass a wretched, miserable night.

CHAPTER III.

HIS FIRST APPEARANCE IN LONDON.

MR. HERBERT WYCLIFFE was likely to make a hit on the boards of St. James's Theatre. Critics applauded the young actor's representation of Charles Surface and crowded audiences applauded the performance to the echo.

It was his first appearance in London. From the provinces he came, almost unknown and totally unrecommended, but the astute manager saw success beaming from the dark eyes of the handsome stranger, tested him, and gave him a chance.

Mr. Herbert Wycliffe was a married man, his wife an extremely lovely girl, scarcely twenty years of age, who under the name of Miss Rose Carlton played the part of Lady Teasdale, and as it went abroad that the acting of both was perfect, rich and poor filled stalls, boxes and gallery of the fashionable theatre.

One night Lord Mostyn and Lois Greville occupied a box. Royalty was present, and the house was crammed to the ceiling. Actors and musicians were on their mettle determined to do their best, and as the curtain went up Lois felt a flutter at her heart without knowing why.

A burst of enthusiasm told her that Herbert Wycliffe was upon the stage. She saw him standing near the footlights, his head modestly inclined in acknowledgment of the applause; but it subsided at last, and he raised his face and spoke. At the same instant Lois, pale and faint, leaned back in her chair.

"Miss Greville!" Lord Mostyn said, in alarm, "what is the matter?"

"Nothing—nothing!" she replied. "Pray do not alarm yourself. The heat has overcome me. I am very sorry, but—but I must return home."

Lord Mostyn rose in haste to order the carriage, but she checked him almost abruptly.

"I will take a cab," she said. "I must go alone—indeed I must. Do not disturb yourself. Nay! say no more, I will have my own way."

Lord Mostyn knew Lois' disposition, and bowing he escorted her to the door and saw her into the cab.

"Extraordinary thing," Lord Mostyn said, in a piqued tone of voice. "The heat had no more effect on her than it had on me. I'll be bound that the fellow Wycliffe has something to do with this—but how? Great Heaven! the girl has the heart and spirit of a Bohemian, and she may have met this actor at some time or the other."

It was past eleven when he called at the house in Eaton Square to seek tidings of Lois' health, and returned to his carriage baffled, bewildered and alarmed.

Lois Greville had rested for an hour, changed her dress, and gone out on foot.

"What on earth is the meaning of these mad-cap pranks?" Lord Mostyn mused. "Ought I to go back and state my suspicions? No! I will see for myself. I feel fully convinced that she has gone back to the theatre."

Dismissing the coachman he retraced his footsteps to St. James's, and arrived there just at the conclusion of the second piece.

A glance at the bill told him that Mr. Herbert Wycliffe took a part in it, and he therefore could not have left. Most of the fashionable company had departed at the conclusion of "The School for Scandal," and there were few people in the street. He looked up and down for Lois, but she was nowhere to be seen.

Suddenly the inner doors of the theatre were thrown open and the people came pouring out. Policemen shouted, linkmen and messengers ran hither and thither in search of cabs, and then all was still.

Lord Mostyn, however, did not desert his post, and yet he felt that he had set himself a mean and unworthy task, and it struck him that perhaps after all he was making a fool of himself.

Soon actors and actresses began to leave by the stage door, and one lady, in whom he recognised the celebrated Rose Carlton, said, as she stepped into a cab:

"Tell my husband to follow on as soon as he has finished his business with the manager. I am tired out. Good night."

A few more minutes passed away and then the door opened again, and Mr. Herbert Wycliffe, with a lady clinging affectionately to his arm, emerged into the street.

The lady was Lois Greville.

There could be no mistake about it. Lord Mostyn saw her face plainly, and he started back into the shadow of a doorway, checking an exclamation that rose involuntarily to his lips.

There was but one cab left in the street, which was taken by Herbert Wycliffe and Lois Greville, and as they were driven away Lord Mostyn removed his hat and wiped the moisture from his face.

"Great Heaven!" he cried. "If another man had told me this I would have choked him with his own words. What am I to do? In the name of reason and common sense how am I to act? At all hazards—painful as is my duty—I will do it."

Crossing Piccadilly he met Lord Charles Crawshaw, who had just left his club and was going home on foot.

"What, Mostyn?" Lord Crawshaw said. "Doing the economical as well as I? I could not get a hansom, and as to a four-wheeler—why, it is out of the question. I am glad I have met you. Come here with me and smoke a cigar. No! I say! how pale you are, my dear fellow! You look as if you had been keeping company with a ghost."

"Crawshaw," said Lord Mostyn, stopping suddenly, "I am fully convinced that notwithstanding all your affability you regard me as your rival. I never have been, and I now thank God that the thought of Lois Greville has never caused me one pang of pain or regard beyond friendship."

"He has taken too much wine," Lord Crawshaw thought. "Why have you brought this up?" he asked, sternly.

"Because I know that you take more than a common interest in her," Lord Mostyn replied. "I know that you love her purely and unselfishly, and I tell you now that she, so far from being worthy of your love, has no claim on your respect."

"Have a care!" Lord Crawshaw said, clutching his walking-stick fiercely. "You have been drowning some care or other in wine."

"I have been with Lois Greville," Lord Mostyn replied. "I will conceal nothing. I will tell you the story of to-night."

As the last words were uttered Lord Charles Crawshaw reeled like a man smitten with a sudden illness, but recovering himself quickly, he said:

"Mostyn, I have wronged you. I beg your

pardon. Grant me a favour. Do not go to Eaton Square to-night."

"But—"

"The morning will be time enough for you to tell how the false-hearted girl has taken flight with this vagabond actor," Lord Crawshaw interrupted.

"I wish to do everything for the best," Lord Mostyn replied. "Oh, mercy!—oh, shame!—oh, ruin! I would rather have seen the girl fall dead at my feet than to witness what I did to-night. And yet I somehow feel as if I were the cause of this unhappy disaster. Curse the theatre and all connected with it."

"So," said Lord Crawshaw, as he took his friend's arm, "this is the reason why. Farewell to all my golden dreams. If I could but banish the thought of her I would gladly change places with that wretched creature shivering on yonder doorstep."

He tossed the beggar half-a-crown as he spoke and passed on with Lord Mostyn at his side.

It was late before they retired, and in the morning they strolled into the park before proceeding to Eaton Square. Indeed they scarcely had the courage to go, for the story must be retold to the Wellingtons, Lois' guardians, who loved the bright-faced, merry girl as dearly as if she had been their own child.

They also expected to hear the bad news from other lips. But no; they met many people, exchanged a few words, and passed on.

Suddenly Lois Greville appeared mounted on a splendid horse. Her groom was in attendance, and Lois looked as bright and smiling as the beautiful morning.

No apparition could have caused so much astonishment to the two lords as did the appearance of Lois Greville. Their first impulse was to hurry away, but before they could do so Lois had recognised them and bowed and received the dearest of all cuts, calm, motionless faces, which plainly said, "The reason we do not know Miss Greville is because we do not know her."

Poor Lois scarcely knew what to make of it. Her face grew crimson and then turned as pale as death.

"So," said she, as she recovered her self-control and cantered to the end of the Row, "there is a conspiracy against me. Well and good. Oh, most noble lords, I will have a most bitter revenge for this."

Meanwhile Lord Crawshaw and Lord Mostyn had left the park and were wending their way towards Tattersall's.

"This is a most inscrutable mystery," Lord Crawshaw said, "I hardly know what to make of it. Perhaps we ought to have asked an explanation."

"Good gracious! what folly," Lord Mostyn replied. "What should we have received but an indignant denial? Believe me, she could find reasons for absence from home and contrive to brand me as a liar."

"Heigho!" Lord Crawshaw sighed, "I think I will buy a thorough-bred and train him myself. Perhaps that is the best way of getting my neck broken, and will read far more respectable in the newspapers than suicide!"

"I should not break either my heart or neck about her," Lord Mostyn replied. "I start next week for a cruise and you had better go with me."

"Agreed. I care not what I do so long as I get out of London. Phew! I can hardly breathe its air."

The first man they encountered was Sir John Haliwell, who, leaning on the arm of his faithful servant, was rating him soundly one moment for crawling like a snail and the next for hurrying along like a steam engine.

But Perkins knew his master and duty well and bore the tirade of abuse with Spartan-like fortitude.

"Hallo! Crawshaw," said Sir John, "settling your Derby bets, eh? Why, you have a face as long as a showman's fiddle. Ah! well, if you youngsters will interfere with the turf you must expect to slip up occasionally."

"I have lost—or rather won, it is the same thing—just twelve dozen—goodness only knows

how many buttoned gloves," Lord Crawshaw replied, "so you may conclude, Sir John, that the bookmakers will not regard me with very favourable eyes. I remember two lines from 'Punch':

"Here's a maxim for you old stagers—
Hens lay eggs and fools lay wagers,

and profit by it."

"I am glad I have seen you," Sir John Haliwell replied. "Crawshaw, they tell me that you are engaged to Lois Greville, my vixen niece."

"If it is a fact I am ignorant of it," Lord Crawshaw replied, a little haughtily. "It takes two people to make a quarrel, and I presume the same rule is applicable to an engagement."

"Well, well, people who have nothing else better to do will talk," Sir John said. "I am glad to hear you say it is not so. If I had my mind I'd send that girl to school again and not let her out until she knew manners. But surely you proposed to her."

"Certainly I did."

"And you thought better of it?"

"I must confess that she refused me," Lord Crawshaw replied, colouring to the roots of his hair.

"So the old fable of the Fox and the Grapes has been told again," Sir John Haliwell said, laughing. "Well, never mind, I am an old man and don't often entertain anybody, but I shall be glad if you and Lord Mostyn will dine with me to-morrow night."

Their lordships expressed their delight and parted with the gouty old knight.

"Sir John hates Lois," Lord Crawshaw said. "She is more than a match for him in an argument and he vents his spleen on her behind her back."

"What! thinking of that girl again," Lord Mostyn said, reproachfully. "If her name passes your lips again for twenty-four hours I will run away from you and leave you to your miserable fate."

"If you wish to oblige me turn sexton for once in your life and bury me right off," Lord Crawshaw returned, dolefully. "I have seen enough of these horses. There is nothing to suit me. Come to the club and go through the farce of luncheon."

"And after that," Lord Mostyn said, "I will read you the police intelligence and make you superbly happy."

CHAPTER IV.

A SHORT CHAPTER, BUT NOT ALTOGETHER UNINTERESTING.

"My dear Lois," said Mrs. Wallington, the next morning, "can you throw any light on Lord Crawshaw's conduct? He sent an indifferent apology for his absence here last night. I begin to think that you have really offended him."

"Indeed," Lois replied, "if there is any offence it has been given to me. I have not the slightest interest in what Lord Crawshaw says or does."

"You are a strange girl," Mrs. Wallington said. "We had made up our minds that it was a match between you and his lordship. Lois, I have noticed a change in you of late—a change which few would see. To others you are the same, but to me your laugh is forced, your happiness assumed, and I often catch you in a train of painful thought. Confide in me, dear Lois. If you have a secret let me share it."

"Not yet," Lois replied, covering her face with her hands and beginning to sob. "Not yet, my second mother. Do not misjudge me, but trust me, and as you love me do not refer to this subject again. In due time I will come to you and tell you all."

Mrs. Wallington smoothed back Lois' golden hair and kissed away her tears.

"Trust you, my darling," said the old lady, "of course I do, but I cannot bear to see you unhappy. There, there, run and dress yourself and go out for a walk. It will do you good and I

hope give you a better appetite than you have had for days."

Lois Greville acted on this suggestion—in fact she wanted an excuse to get out of the house without creating suspicion—and a few minutes found her walking along the bye streets leading to St. James's Theatre.

Arriving at its closed doors she was met by Mr. Herbert Wycliffe, whose face beamed with pleasure as he took her hand.

"I cannot kiss you here, Lois," he said, smiling. "Well, any news? What was said about your absence on the night before last?"

"Nothing," Lois replied. "I had only to say I called on a friend. I took the same cab back—and what do you think?"

"The fellow overcharged you."

"No. I saw Lord Mostyn and Lord Charles Crawshaw conversing under a lamp near Hyde Park Corner."

"Did they see you?"

"I don't think so," Lois replied, "and yet they cut me dead in the Park yesterday morning."

Herbert Wycliffe's lips turned pale with rage. "Well, we will dismiss them," he said, after a pause. "So you will be ready at eight o'clock this evening?"

"Yes, and every precaution must be made against failure," Lois replied. "Your wife suspects nothing?"

"Nothing whatever."

"Then expect me at the usual time," Lois said. "I have arranged with Ambleton, the livery stable keeper, to have the carriage ready. It will be waiting at the corner of Jermyn Street."

"My better angel," said Herbert Wycliffe, "how happy you have made me."

They parted, and Lois returned home with a rosy glow on her cheeks, and Mrs. Wallington saw another change in her. Lois was herself again.

"I am going to see my dear old uncle, Sir John Haliwell, to-night," she said, carelessly. "I shall walk there, and if needful I shall bid him send me back in his carriage."

"Has Sir John invited you?"

"Not any more than he did on the occasion of my last visit," Lois replied, laughing. "Why, we are the best of friends, although neither of us will confess it. He calls me a vixen and seals his door against me, I burst that seal, invade him in his den, and call him a hard-hearted old bear. Oh! we understand each other thoroughly."

"Well, I suppose you must have your own way," Mrs. Wallington said, with mild reproach beaming out of her eyes, "but if I had mine you should never go near him."

"And let him waste his money in telegrams to me when he repents," Lois returned. "No, no; I shall spare him that trouble, and though he lives in hourly torture expecting me he would be angry if I did not see him sometimes. Mamma, you may expect to hear some news when I return."

"Do you think he will alter his will?"

"If he did I should have a worse opinion of him than ever," Lois said. "I suppose I shall have to sing to him, so I had better practise a little."

Lois Greville, what is that you are practising on those who love and trust you? You are so calm, your voice is so sweet and pure, that well may Mrs. Wallington bless the hour that you were handed over to her charge. Are you deceiving her, basely deceiving her, to break her heart and cause that fair face to be chased with lines of care? No, no, Lois, you will not do that. But—

CHAPTER V.

SIR JOHN HALIWELL'S LITTLE DINNER PARTY.

"I WISH we had not fallen across Sir John Haliwell," Lord Mostyn said. "It is an awful bore to have to dine with a gouty old Tory, who is death on enclosing Commons and the glories of the Feudal System. I say, Crawshaw, do you

think a telegram to the effect that the house was on fire would relieve us of the affliction?"

"Oh! certainly," Lord Crawshaw replied. "It would relieve us from going to Sir John, but he would come to us if he suffered all the tortures of the Spanish Inquisition in getting here."

"Then there is no help for it," Lord Mostyn sighed. "Are you ready?"

"Yes, with the exception of this confounded left-hand glove."

"Carry it in your hand as we used to do at school."

Sir John was expecting his visitors, and they found him more genial and cheerful than they had ever known him before. His old complaint had left him for the time, and when dinner was announced he refused the aid of Perkins's arm and hobbled into the room.

"Why are four chairs placed?" he demanded.

"Four, Sir John!" gasped the butler, turning a wrathful glare on the attendant footman. "I ordered three."

"And three I placed," said the footman.

"That's a——" Sir John was beginning to bluster, when the door opened and Lois Greville sailed grandly into the room.

"Your servant has spoken nothing but the truth," she said. "He placed three, and I took the liberty of adding the fourth while he went downstairs."

"You!" Sir John panted. "Mercy on me! How—how did you find your way into the house?"

"By the garden, through the kitchen, and so upstairs," Lois replied. "You see, uncle, it is no use trying to keep me out. I am determined to come and see you sometimes."

She had not taken the slightest notice of Lord Crawshaw and Mostyn, and they sat looking exceedingly sheepish and wishing themselves a thousand miles away from the house.

"And now you are here what do you want?" Sir John demanded, bluntly.

"Some dinner, please, uncle," Lois said, demurely. "See, I place another chair. That will make five, because I have asked a very old friend of mine. You don't object, uncle, I know, and I am sure you will forgive the eccentricities of your loving niece."

Sir John Haliwell could do nothing but stare. Bereft of speech and almost of breath he saw Lois add the chair to the table and then dismiss the servants in a style that admitted of no argument. Her eyes spoke for her and they vanished.

"There! now we are quite comfortable," Lois said, still ignoring the other visitors. "Uncle, I have some news for you. Don't faint. There is nothing wrong with the money market, and the labourers have not struck—as yet—against ten shillings a week."

"Is this girl mortal?" Sir John groaned.

"I hope so," Lois replied. "I was never credited with being spirituelle. Listen to me, you—well, I won't call you hard names."

She crossed over to his side and put her arms round his neck.

"Oh! uncle, uncle," she cried, "listen to me, and don't abuse your real nature by trying to harden your heart. I have found Jack—Jack, your son, and my best of cousins. You know why he would not come to you, because you refused to see his wife—the woman of his love and heart. What if she be an actress? Are there not women who have to toil for daily bread who can look proudly in the faces of the best of us? When will the ignorance of men be blotted out? When will the day come when women who have to face the world shall be respected instead of carped at and sneered at? When will the truth of the poet's words be acknowledged as truth?"

"Kind hearts are more than coronets
And simple faith than Norman blood."

Your son saw and loved Rose Carlton——
"Rose Carlton?" Lord Mostyn cried, involuntarily. "Why, she is the celebrated actress playing at St. James's."

"Yes," Lois said, turning almost fiercely on him, "and Mr. Herbert Wycliffe is John Haliwell. My lord, I am indebted to you; you saw me drive away in a cab with him. If you had used your legs as well as your eyes you would

have seen us alight at the turning of the street and part with the resolve to meet again on the following day. I say I am indebted to you, because whatever you thought you kept to yourself and Lord Crawshaw. Uncle," she continued, turning to Sir John Haliwell, "your son is at the door. In his hand is a telegram to his wife to come here and receive your blessing. He never told her that he is the son of a wealthy man. They married for love and are happy, very happy, but you can make them more so."

Sir John made a feint to shake off the embrace. He declared that another attack of the gout was coming on, that he would never forgive his son; but suddenly tears welled into his eyes.

"You vixen," he cried, giving Lois a hearty kiss, "you have brought me to myself. Make haste and fetch Jack or he may go away. Perkins can send the telegram. Phew! am I awake? Quick! quick!"

Lois had left the room, and again footsteps sounded lightly on the thickly-carpeted stairs.

"Tableau," Lois cried, throwing open the door and clapping her hands. "Jack, when you have done squeezing the last bit of hard-heartedness out of your father come back and give your loving cousin a kiss."

Sir John Haliwell and his son, standing with their hands locked, looked into each other's eyes.

"My boy," Sir John said, and his lips trembled, "Lois has shown me something I was blind enough not to see before. When I look in that mirror opposite I see the reflection of an old fool. Forgive me."

"And forgive me, and——"

"When your wife arrives we will talk about that," Sir John interrupted. "Put back the dinner. We—oh! another twinge—never mind—we will make amends for the past. Lois, you vixen, place another chair, as there will be six of us. But I say, Jack, you must go back to that confounded theatre, I suppose."

"This is Ash Wednesday," Jack replied.

"As he ought to have known," Lois chimed in, wrathfully.

It was a merry dinner party, but there were two at the table who did not feel particularly comfortable, and they were Lord Crawshaw and Mostyn.

Lois was inclined to forgive, and teased Lord Mostyn unmercifully, but to Lord Crawshaw she paid little attention, but in the drawing-room she glanced at him from under the long fringe-like lashes and he went to her.

"Lois—I beg your pardon—Miss Greville, I owe you an apology."

"No, no," she said. "The temporary injury I inflicted on you I felt as keenly myself. But, dearest, I could not rest while Jack was an outcast, and I made up my mind to set the matter right. You can understand all now."

"And you have done it most nobly, my darling."

"And now," said Lois, "bring the chess board. I can't play, but that doesn't matter, we can talk. Are you satisfied with my reason for refusing you at first?"

"It makes you all the dearer to me," Lord Crawshaw replied. "Here comes Lord Mostyn."

"So you too have come to the Court of Forgiveness," Lois said. "I grant an acquittal; I find you not guilty, but don't do it again. Oh, by the way, my cousin, Ella Arnold, told me some news this morning about you and herself. She is a dear girl, and you can tell her that you have shaken hands with Lord Crawshaw and me. Say that we have settled all our quarrels, buried the past, live in the present, and hope for a bright and happy future; and say that when I see her I will tell her the REASON WHY."

THE young lady attendants at the Court Theatre are now clad in a yellow waistcoat, navy blue swallow-tailed dress coat, erect collar, and black silk evening tie. They certainly wear a

black skirt clinging closely to the legs, but with their hair cropped close to the head in the prevailing style one might easily mistake their sex.

MY BÊTE NOIR.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

"Do come with us—do!" came from all sides of the room in the most persuasive accents, and I began to see that I must yield.

I had only gone out, since Jack's death, to visit very intimate friends, and never to any gaiety, for I knew my black dress and sober manner would only sadden my light-hearted acquaintances; but now the dress was grey, and the invitation so kind that consent seemed inevitable.

"Well," I said, slowly and solemnly, as such an important decision demanded, "I will go."

"Hurrah!" shouted Dick and James.

"That's right," said Nellie, approvingly. "I am glad to see you coming to your senses at last."

Nellie and I are the warmest friends, and she generally has everything her own way; for I am lazy, though I can be obstinate enough on occasions.

"Now do not keep us waiting any longer; we shall be late as it is."

"What shall I wear?" I asked, rising somewhat reluctantly from the depths of my favourite easy chair.

"Bless the child!" laughed Gracie Armstrong. "Wear what you have on, of course. It is not a party, only ten or twelve of us spending the evening together. You'll not mind dancing now, dear, and there are several people coming I want you to know."

"Not men, Grace?" I asked, nervously.

"Yes, men," she answered, laughing. "And now run and get your wraps."

An hour later I was standing in Mrs. Armstrong's handsome parlours, clinging close to Gracie's arm as she introduced me to two or three of the dreaded men. I suppose they could see how shy I was, for they talked to me in the kindly tone one might use to a child. They were all over forty, and I was just beginning to feel at ease, and return intelligible answers to their remarks, when I heard a stir at the door and a man's deep, sweet voice say to my Cousin Nellie:

"You here, Nellie? How more than glad I am to meet you again!"

Then her answer:

"Just the same incorrigible flatterer as ever. When did you come back?"

They chatted merrily for a few moments, and then Nellie turned to me.

"My cousin, Miss Granger, Mr. Leighton."

I bowed, and a shudder ran through my whole frame as Nellie's next words fell upon my ear.

"Now, Dudley, you must entertain Mary while I go and speak to Mrs. Richards. The dear old lady is quite deserted in that corner."

Dudley—Dudley Leighton! The name was connected in my memory with the greatest sorrow of my life; with disgrace and pain unutterable. I had hated this man for three years past, had avoided him on every occasion, and now fate had brought us face to face. With a strong effort for self control I raised my eyes to his and met his glance, frank, smiling, a little wondering.

My first sensation was that of utter surprise.

How can so true a face mask so black a soul? There are honour and kindness in the gaze of the bright blue eyes, strength and sweetness in the lines of the mouth and the square-cut, resolute chin. Can I ever believe in a face again and doubt this man's truth?

I felt my old hatred of him slipping away from me as I listened to the sweet, low tones as he

talked pleasantly on one subject and another. I suppose my answers were coherent enough, for he did not betray any consciousness of the confused state of my mind.

"Nellie has not forgotten her old tricks, I see," he said, presently. "I am afraid—to judge by Mrs. St. John's face—that she is going a little too far to-night."

I was in arms at once in defence of this my favourite cousin.

"Nellie cannot help it if men will pay her attention," I returned, icily; "and if Will St. John chooses to make a fool of himself and his wife jealous, pray how is she to help it?"

"By showing him that she does not care for such marked devotion," was the quiet answer; "and allow me to say, Miss Granger, you cannot show less consideration for her real good than by encouraging her in this matter."

I was speechless with indignation. All my shyness was lost in a tempest of anger that he, of all men, should presume to take me to task for what I said. Of course I did not approve of it any more than he did, but then I could see what he did not, that the fault lay with Will and not with Nellie. She had been called a flirt, and perhaps she was, but flirt with married men she did not, and I was not going to have her belied by this cool, self-conceited fault finder.

"It strikes me, Mr. Leighton," I said, as soon as I found my voice, "that you might for once lay aside masculine blindness and give the blame where it is due. My cousin is simply courteous, as she would be to any man, and because Mr. St. John has forgotten the respect due his wife, Nellie must be the one in fault. Truly chivalry has few adherents in these days, and women few knightly defenders!"

I spoke bitterly, as I felt, and he coloured under the scorn in my tone.

"You are severe, Miss Granger."

"I am just," I returned. "And now you must excuse me; and as he crossed to speak to Amy St. John I walked away to the other end of the room."

"Mary, dear," said my hostess, "will you sing for me? Now do not refuse," as she saw me hesitate; and having made up my mind to be agreeable I went to the piano at once.

As I sat there a moment, going over the songs I knew, old memories came thronging around me. It was long since my fingers had touched the keys, and almost unconsciously I strayed into the sad tones of Tennyson's "Break."

"For mercy's sake, Mary, do give us something lively!" said Nellie, as the last wailing chord sounded through the stillness; and sorry that I had been so selfish I broke into "Barney O'Hea," which effectually banished the sadness from all but one face.

Nellie's had not been the only eyes I had seen when I finished the first song. They were reading my face with a puzzled, searching gaze that almost angered me.

Why, oh, why, when I was just beginning to feel peaceful and resigned to what had been, should this man come into my life to bring back the old pain? And worst of all, why was it that, despite his falsehood and treachery, I could not look on his face and hate him as he deserved? I despised myself, but I could not help it. One thing, though, I would not do; I would never touch his hand in friendship; even in the square dance I avoided it, and he was sufficiently the gentleman not to risk exposing himself to slight when he saw I was acting with a purpose.

"Miss Granger," he said, when we were preparing to go home, "it may be impertinent in me to suppose such a thing, but I should say from your manner that you have some very grave cause for being angry with me. Is it so, and what can be your reason?"

"You are right, Mr. Leighton; and," I added, looking him squarely in the face, "you will understand why when I say that I am Paul Cazade's sister, and that Heloise Athol was my dear friend."

Only surprise in the eyes looking into mine, and in the voice which said:

"Paul's sister! Then we should be good friends, Miss Granger."

I was fairly trembling with scorn and anger as I answered:

"Your friend! How dare you say so!" and before astonishment allowed him to reply I had taken Jamie's arm and we were out in the cool night air, walking quickly toward home.

For long hours I sat in my room, going over in my mind the whole wretched story which even I did not know fully. It was connected with my step-brother, Paul Cazade. He had always been my hero, and in my childish days I had been his willing slave. Three years older than I, he ruled me completely, and I believed in him as firmly as I did in my religion. He was very gay, and ere long stories of his wild dissipation reached us from the city. But I clung to my belief in his goodness, and when the blow fell at last it had well nigh killed me.

One night there came a letter for me, telling all the painful tale. It was in my desk now, and I rose and took it out, smoothing the creases and shedding more than one bitter tear on the writing already blurred and blotted by other tears than mine.

"MY OWN DEAR SISTER,

"In the world you are the only one to whom I dare own my sins and believe that I will be loved in spite of all. You have heard of my wildness, and I must now tell you more."

"When I left college I saw and fell in love with Heloise Athol. You know her well. She loved me in return, and for a time I was as happy as a man could be. But one day the tempter came and led me on from one sin to another until I became a common gambler and drunkard. Then he contrived to become acquainted with Heloise, and finally succeeded in poisoning her mind against me, and her father turned me from the door like a dog. The next month she fled, where I knew not, and soon after that in one of my drunken rages, the same vile tempter persuaded me to forge her father's name. But one thing I solemnly enjoin on you when you think of what I might be but for him, remember Dudley Leighton, and repay him if you can what he has done for me."

"I am going to South America, and you will never see me again. Pray for me and forgive me, my darling, and remember that to Dudley Leighton I owe this future."

"Your unfortunate brother,
PAUL CAZADE."

Yes, to Dudley Leighton he owed this future and exile from his home and friends, a blighted youth, a dishonoured name. Oh, my brother! And to think that he should call us both friends! How dare he do it, knowing all he did?

As I tossed uneasily on my pillow plan after plan started through my head, but each was rejected in turn; and morning brought better and more Christian thoughts. But morning also brought Nellie, and with her a host of recollections of all we had said and done the previous evening.

"And now, Mary," she began, in the most wheedling tone, "how do you like Dudley Leighton?"

"I do not like him at all."

I am afraid my tones were cross as well as decided, for Nellie looked up in surprise.

"Why, Mary, you never spoke that way of any one! What in the world did he do to make you dislike him?"

"Nothing," I returned, a little untruthfully, it must be confessed.

"Nonsense!" returned my clear-sighted cousin. "You are not one to dislike people without some cause. Come, now, like a good girl, tell me the reason."

But I maintained an obstinate silence, and after looking at me a moment or two she broke out:

"Well, Mary Granger, I give you up! For two years I have been introducing to you the very nicest men I know, and your serene highness has been calmly indifferent; and when, in desperation, I bring up the very best of all, you coolly tell me you dislike him without even saying why. Pray, do you intend remaining an old maid all your days?"

In spite of my seriousness I had to laugh at her tragic tones.

"No, no, Nellie! But find someone beside your hero of last night, and I promise to consider the matter."

"Oh, yes!" she returned. "You have said about the same thing hundreds of times before; nevertheless, I don't see that we come any nearer to the point."

"Look here, Nell," I said, carrying the war into the enemy's quarter, "when do you intend to give up flirting?"

"Never!" was the prompt reply.

"Never," I repeated, horrified at this declaration. "And pray what would Christopher Carlyle say to that if he heard you?"

"Christopher Carlyle knows it would be best to say nothing. Why, he does not mind at all—is quite used to it by this time!"

"Poor fellow!" I answered. "He is that best of all good things—a patient man."

"Is he indeed?" returned Nell. "I tell you he can lose his temper sometimes, and frighten me out of my wits."

All that winter Dudley haunted me like my shadow, always pleasant and courteous, taking not the slightest notice of my chilling manner, except that he never by any accident offered me his hand. And I, slowly and surely, was beginning to love him—to listen for his step and the sound of his voice, to feel his presence a pleasure, his absence a pain; and day after day I strove against the feeling and hated myself for it.

It was one night when we were coming home with Nell and Christopher Carlyle, and the added tenderness and deference in his voice and manner tortured me beyond endurance, that I came to a sudden resolution. I would be cold no longer. I knew that he loved me as dearly as I loved him, and that love I determined should be the punishment of both. So when he came to see me, and when we met among friends, I let him know that I was glad, and treated him in the pleasant, cordial manner I showed toward my cousins, Dick and Jamie Tremaine; and then came the end.

He told me how dearly he loved me, how happy he would strive to make me if I would only be his wife; and with every tender word finding an echo in my own heart I answered him:

"Dudley Leighton, I would rather die this moment than be your wife! Hush! do not ask the reason why this; I know what you would say. I led you on to hope for a very different ending, but it was done with a purpose. I wanted your love that I might cast it from me—might make your life as wretched as you made mine and my brother's four years ago. He begged me to avenge him, and I think I have done it."

He looked stunned but not guilty.

"For God's sake, Mary, what do you mean? Your brother and I were dear friends. I swear it! I never did aught in my life to harm him. There is some terrible mistake on your part."

"Some terrible lie on yours, sir!" I returned, sternly. "In my poor brother's last letter he begged me to remember that it was to you he owed his miserable future, and solemnly enjoined me to pay the debt he owed; that is why I never touched your hand—why at first I was cold, and afterward, seeing that you cared for me, the thought came that I might avenge him in this way."

"Mary Granger," he said, quietly, "before God I was your brother's best friend! Do you not believe me?"

"No, I do not," I answered.

But in my heart I did.

"I love you too well to give you up easily. What can I do to prove what I say?"

I looked up at the pale, quiet face on which the moonlight fell brightly. No meanness there, no betrayal of friendship. Honour and truth and a great pain and love I could read in the blue eyes, but nothing of what I had accused him.

As I looked a great wave of pity for him and for myself came over me. What if, after all, there were some mistake? Could I not give him one more last chance?

He stood motionless waiting for my answer.
"If you find my brother and bring him back to me I will believe you," I said, at length.

"Very well. I will leave to-morrow, and you will never see my face again until you see his. Remember, I will never give you up while I live. And now good bye, dear, and whatever happens remember I never blamed you."

He looked at me wistfully for a moment.
"Will you please give me that flower in your hair, Mary?"

I let him take the white rosebud, and as he turned away I held out my hand; but he drew back, though he saw the misery in my face.

"No, I will never touch it until you can believe me—until I bring your brother back again. Do you know where he is?"

"In South America," I answered.

One last, low-spoken good bye, and he was gone; and for long hours after I was conscious of nothing but that I had had my revenge.

Wearily months followed—months filled with useless repenting for the cruel part I had played. I felt, now that it was too late, thoroughly convinced that there was some mistake, and that he was, as he said, a true friend to Paul.

I went out oftener than ever, and endeavoured in the whirl of excitement to forget the dull pain at my heart. Nellie was the only one who guessed the true state of affairs, and she, like an angel, took no notice of my moods.

A year passed away. All my old, timid manner had dropped from me, I was cold and reserved—some said haughty and self-conceited, and openly bemoaned the change. A few months longer and I lost my last ray of sunshine, for Nellie rewarded Christopher Carlyle's long waiting. They were married in the sunny October weather and sailed for Italy, and the night before the wedding Nellie won from me the whole story of the past.

She was gentle and tender, as she always was when her heart was touched, and somehow her hopeful words comforted me.

"He will come back, Mary, and bring Paul with him. God will not punish you so severely, though I am afraid you have been sinful in taking this vengeance into your own hands, and I know enough of Dudley to be certain you are in some way mistaken. Perhaps it was not in that way Paul meant to have spoken of him."

But I shook my head hopelessly. I could put no other interpretation on his words.

When she went away I dropped gradually out of the round of gaieties. My life stretched before me, lonely and desolate. It was now nearly two years since he had left, and no word, no rumour, to tell me if he were even alive, and I knew he would never come back until he had found Paul. Better thoughts came out of my solitude. If I might not make my own life happy, could I not brighten the lives of many around me that in my prosperity I had never thought of before? Ere long I was a welcome visitor in every cottage along the shore, and I found a better use for my fortune in relieving the trials of the poor than in seeking only my own pleasure.

One evening, as I sat in the great, lonely drawing-room, a knock came at the door. I started, for I was growing nervous of late, and felt a presentiment of something unusual. The servants never disturbed me at this hour, but now David, an old man who grown grey in the service of our family, ventured, bearing an ominous yellow envelope.

"A telegram, Miss Mary," he said, with trouble in his face and voice; for it was the first time in my recollection that one had been received in the house.

My hand trembled as I tore it open and glanced over the contents.

"Your uncle cannot live a week. Can you come at once?" **RALPH LE TARGES M. D.**

I handed the paper to David.

"I shall leave in an hour. Will you see that the carriage is ready and send Ellen to me? I shall put the house in your charge."

The old man bowed.

"I am very sorry, Miss Mary; but it might not be so bad. Doctors are often mistaken."

"I fear it is only too true in this case, David."

An hour later we were in the cars, bound westward for Lynton.

Philip Vaneburg was my mother's only brother, and he had made me promise on his last visit to our home that when he should send for me I would go. Dear old man! His life had been as lonely as my own, still I could not induce him to make his home with me; and now he was dying, and I was going to him as fast as steam could take me.

We arrived not a moment too soon, for the hands stretched out to clasp mine trembled sadly, and the voice was hardly more than a whisper as he called me his darling Mary's child and thanked me for coming so soon. Then for awhile he grew stronger, and told me of a fair, sad woman who had cared for him as tenderly as his dead daughter might have done, and how he wished to leave her all he had. I was rich, he said, and would not need this, and her life was a hard one, telling all day in the village school. Margaret Edmonds he called her, and I promised to be her friend if she would let me. Then peacefully and gently the pure, patient soul went out to meet the God he had served so faithfully through such a long, troubled life, and as I closed the tired eyes and smoothed the hair back from his forehead I thought of my own cross and owned that my suffering was but just.

At the funeral I met Miss Edmonds, and her face haunted me. Where had I seen one like it before? Every time I looked at her it grew more and more familiar; still I could not recall any one of that name.

In the evening I walked down to see her, in compliance with my uncle's wish. She came into the room to meet me with the low-spoken words:

"Miss Granger, I believe?"

Now I may sometimes forget faces, but voices never, and I knew her at once.

"Heloise! Heloise Athol! You here?" and I shrank from the outstretched hand; the shadow of the wrong done my brother lay between us.

"Mary, forgive me!" she pleaded. I hoped I was so changed that you would not have recognised me."

"Your face is changed," I answered, "but I knew your voice at once."

In spite of myself my tones were cold, and Heloise sighed as she drew an easy chair toward the window.

"Come, Mary, sit down for a little while; you at least shall not misjudge me any longer. You know what Paul became before he went abroad, and you know, too, that he thought me untrue; but I was not. I believed what they told me—how could I help it? I had seen him so intoxicated that he did not know me. Then I left home secretly. But the reason of my flight was this: My father was trying to force me into a marriage with a man I detested—a man thoroughly bad, thought to look at him you would not have believed it."

My heart sank within me, and I could not ask his name. The certainty of my suspicions would be too bitter. Such little hope as I had felt was better than this. But overmastering my selfish grief was a deep pity and reverence for this girl who had been so brave. Reared in the lap of luxury, disappointed in the man she loved, she still had the courage to go forth and earn her bread rather than be untrue to him and to herself.

"Heloise, Heloise!" I cried. "Forgive me and come back to me. Come home and live with me. No one need know your name, and my life is a very quiet one. Come and be my sister."

And then, suppressing all mention of Dudley Leighton, I told her the story of Paul's sin, and how someone had gone to find him, and my belief that he would one day come back to us.

At first she resisted, but then I spoke of my uncle's will and entreated her so earnestly that she was forced to yield, and together we returned to St. Mary's.

There one twilight I was singing some low melody when I felt two soft arms around my neck, and Nellie's sweet voice calling me her

own old coz, and her brown eyes looking into mine with the same merry smile behind the tears.

She had come back to me, my sunbeam, and I could hardly cease looking at her for a moment as she rattled on in her old lively way of her voyage, Christopher's goodness, and her own happiness, asking questions with no thought of answer, and hardly stopping for breath.

But at length she paused, and something very hard to tell was coming, for she stammered, hesitated, and finally asked if I could make room for two strangers who had come over with them.

"Why, of course I can," I answered, "there is always plenty of room here. A lady and gentleman, Nellie?"

"No, two gentlemen, and—oh, dear! I am the very worst one to break anything. Cannot you guess who they are, Mary?"

Her excited face and trembling voice aroused me, and the strange, sudden hope made my heart beat so fast that I could not speak, only stare at her with wide-open eyes. But she saw that I knew, for she rose quickly, went toward the door, and admitted someone with a whispered caution as she went out.

I was standing now, and saw a stranger coming toward me. Tall, bronzed, bearded, with nothing familiar about him but his eyes—eyes I remembered so well. My heart went out to him in the one cry:

"Paul!"

When I regained consciousness they were all around me; Nellie's April face smiling through her fast falling-tears, my head on Paul's shoulder as he knelt beside me. And then, for I would not wait, he told me all: how Dudley had sought him through the length and breadth of South America, and at length traced him to the United States; how he followed and found him; how they found Christopher on the steamer; how the story was told him; and then, in quiet tones, that mysterious letter was explained.

William Dunning was the wretch who had ruined him, and then, maddened by disgrace and the fear of exposure, he would have taken his own life had not Dudley Leighton stepped in and saved him, gave him money, and sheltered him while he remained in the States. And the ambiguous wording of a letter had been the cause of all this terrible misunderstanding.

Then I told my story and sent Paul to meet Heloise, who had gone down to the shore on an errand of charity.

"Nellie," I asked, when he was gone, "where is Dudley?"

"In the grounds, dear, down by the old chestnut. Shall I send for him?"

"No," I answered, "it is my place to go to him. Do you think he will ever forgive me?"

"Of course, you foolish child! But are you strong enough to walk?"

"Yes," I said, "that faint was only the result of excitement;" and wrapping my grey shawl around me, I went out and down the path to the old tree.

There was the tall, well-remembered figure, dear when he left me, but how much dearer now! I felt my strength going, and could only cry out:

"Dudley, forgive me!"

The next moment I was safe in his arms, and heard the low-murmured words:

"My darling! Mine at last!"

No reproach for the suffering I had caused him—only this! I do not know how long we stayed there, or what we said; but my pale face at last made him think it time to return to the house, where we found two other happy lovers.

We had a double wedding about a month from that night.

Heloise and Paul have gone back to England. Dudley and I have settled down in my old home, and Nellie often teases me for having, of all things, married "My Bête Noir."



[AIX-LA-CHAPELLE.]

RING LORE.

For sages tell that by creative heaven
Distinctive potency to rings is given,
And hoar experience surely doth attest
The peculiar virtue by each possessor.

UNDER the Roman Empire the right of wearing golden rings remained for several centuries the exclusive privilege of senators, of magistrates, and of the imperial body-guard, or Equites, whilst all other persons who chose to might wear iron ones.

Augustus, when emperor, gave to Antonius Musa, his physician, a handsome gold ring for having cured him of a dangerous malady, and in further gratitude for his skill in preserving his life he ceded to the Roman Doctorate, through him, the power of wearing the same, with all its annexed privileges. From that remote period we read that doctors adopted rings, frequently wearing them upon their thumbs, and upon these rings were engraved their own names, or the denomination of peculiar nostrums.

Indeed, the ring was considered by Hippocrates as essential to complete the toilet of the man of medicine. Many of these rings were supposed to possess hygienic properties, resident either in the metallic hoop, the stone or gem set in it, or else in some nostrum concealed in the bezel.

Amulet rings for medicinal purposes were

greatly in fashion with the empyrics throughout the middle or dark ages. Michaelis, a physician at Leipsic, had a ring made of the tooth of a sea-horse, by which he pretended to cure all diseases.

Rings of lead, mixed with quicksilver, were used against headache; if simply made of gold they were supposed to cure St. Anthony's fire (erysipelas); but if inscribed with magic words their power was irresistible.

Faith in amulets, charms and medicinal rings was so universal in the ancient world that the whole art of medicine consisted, to a very great degree, of directions for their application. Even in our own day the wonderful influence of the imagination in the cure of diseases is well known. A motion of the hand or a glance of the eye will throw a weak or credulous person into a fit, and a pill of bread, if taken with sufficient faith, will effect a cure more quickly than all the drugs in the pharmacopoeia.

There were two varieties of the medical ring—the one used for surgical operations, the other adopted by physicians. "The surgeon, with cuffs turned up and showing nothing on his hands but a costly ring, could approach the timid patient without difficulty, and laying them gently on the skin, chatting facetiously in the meanwhile—for your surgeon is never so jocose as just previous to an operation—he could press a spring against a lancet, which, darting forth swift as a hornet's sting into the vein he designed to open, was as instantly retracted, and

whilst the sufferer resented the pain with indignant surprise the assassin was already holding a basin under the wound and patting the excited martyr on the back, congratulating him on his admirable courage and stoical indifference to pain."

The rings of physicians, though the functions assigned to them were more diversified, produced no such strikingly efficacious effects as those of their surgical brethren; still, they enjoyed a wide repute, and were constantly prescribed in a great variety of maladies.

The idea of wearing rings on the fourth finger of the left hand—because of a supposed artery there that went to the heart—was carried so far that this finger was called *Medicus*, and the old physicians would stir up their medicaments and potions with it, because no venom could adhere to it; "but it will offend a man and communicate itself to the heart."

Alexander Trallianus, a doctor of ancient fame, speaks with great reverence of an iron ring of his own devising, which was invaluable to hypochondriacs and that class of dyspeptics afflicted with what are popularly known as the "blue devils"—a disease which physicians now, often vainly, seek to exorcise with blue pill. It was, no doubt, the known magnetic qualities of iron which first recommended rings of this metal in the treatment of diseases.

The same physician—he flourished in the fourth century—in order to cure the colic, directs the wearing of a ring engraved with the figure of Hercules strangling the Nemean lion. Rings made from the chains of criminals, and iron used in the construction of gibbets, were at one time considered efficacious in cures of headaches and other complaints.

Besides these rings, whose curative properties occupied only some portion of the annular structure, there were others wholly remedial. These disinfected the most poisonous atmosphere and kept plague and miasma at a distance.

Confidence in such rings obtained in England as late as the reign of Queen Elizabeth, for we find her gallant Lord Chancellor—Hatton—sending her majesty one with minute instructions: "A ring against infected air to be worn in . . . of her bosom."

The stones or gems set in rings were supposed not only to exercise great control over diseases, but also to possess much mystical power.

Covered with incantations or Hebrew or Coptic characters, their efficacy over the imagination is said to have been truly wonderful. A few of these gems set in rings, with their peculiar properties, were as follows:

AGATE.—This stone was held in much esteem for all diseases of the eyes, and rendered the wearer eloquent, prudent and amiable. Thus says Marbodius:

"The agate on the wearer strength bestows,
With ruddy health his fresh complexion glows."

AMBER cured all complaints of the throat and drove away venomous animals.

AMETHYST sharpened the wit, diminished sleep and resisted poisons:

"Famed for its power to check the fumes of wine,
Five different species yield the bounteous mine."

BERYL conferred wealth and promoted happiness:

"This potent gem, found in far India's mines,
With mutual love the wedded couple binds."

CALCEDONY procured victory to whoever wore it on his person:

"But pierced, or worn upon the neck or hand,
A sure success in law-suits 'twill command."

CARNELIAN.—A dangerous hemorrhage which neither sedatives, absorbents nor astringents

could control, would cease as soon as the patient donned a blood-red carnelian:

"Its friendly influence checks the rising fray,
And chases spites and quarrels far away."

CORAL was an antidote against nervousness, and "hindered the delusions of the devil":

"'Twill from thy crops avert the arrowy hail,
And with abundance bless the smiling vale."

CRYSTALITE expelled devils, and if held in the left hand it cooled and checked fevers:

"Encased in gold, its strong protective might
Drives far away the terrors of the night."

CRYSTAL drove away evil dreams and baffled both witchcraft and wickedness.

DIAMOND—"The Champion of Gems," if worn in a ring or near the heart, preserved from swooning:

"Baffles the venom'd draft, fierce quarrels heal,
Madness appeases, and stays the foe-man's steel."

EMERALD was an enemy to all impurity, and enabled the wearer to foresee future events:

"Wear it with reverence due, 'twill wealth bestow,
And words persuasive from thy lips shall flow."

HYACINTH procured sleep more infallibly than opium:

"On all thy wanderings honours shall attend,
And noxious air shall ne'er thy health offend."

JASPER was held by the ancients in greater medical esteem than any other stone. It cured dropsies and drove away fevers:

"Hung round the neck, it eases travail's throes,
And guards the wearer from approaching woes."

JET was strongly recommended to married ladies:

"It cures the the dropsy, shaky teeth are fixed,
Washed with the powdered stone in water mixed."

MAGNET:

"It gives the power to argue and to teach,
Grace to the tongue, persuasion to the speech."

OPAL was said to sharpen the sight of the wearer, and to cloud the eyes of those around him.

RUBY restrained fury and wrath; cured diseases of the eyes and pains in the liver.

SAPPHIRE procured for the wearer favour with princes, pacified enemies, and freed from enchantments:

"But he who dares to wear this gem divine,
Like snow, in perfect chastity must shine."

TOPAZ:

"One only virtue Nature grants this stone—
Those to relieve who under hemorrhoids groan."

TURQUOISE, if worn in a ring of gold, will preserve the wearer from falls and bruises; nor, while on a journey, will his horse tire or throw him. It destroyed animosity, and appeased dissent between man and wife.

The use of amulets, worn in rings for con-

venience, to cure diseases or to avert danger, was common amongst ignorant Christians in very early times, nor is the superstition yet extinct. St. Chrysostom thundered against them, so did St. Basil, which shows that this delusion of trying to cure diseases without physic was deeply rooted in the hearts of some of their followers.

But some of the saints and sages were as credulous as doctors in ascribing curative powers to certain rings. Both St. Augustine and Clement of Alexandria profess to have seen on sundry occasions

"Men who had spent all upon physicians' fees,
Nor ever slept, nor known one moment's ease,
Restored as roaches sound, and all as brisk as bees,"

entirely through the intervention of rings.

St. Augustine details with minuteness the case of a woman who, by wearing a ring in a girdle round her loins, enclosing a portion of a sheep's calculus, was effectually cured of a deep-seated organic disease. Hugo, Bishop of Grenoble, was said to have performed wonderful cures by means of a ring, and even after his death, while the sacred corpse lay in state, mothers brought their little ones to touch his bier. Edward the Confessor possessed a ring capable of curing epilepsy; and tradition assigns Joseph of Arimathea as its original owner. The royal touch for the cure of another complaint probably originated the story of this ring; the practice continued till Queen Anne's reign, and Dr. Johnson was the last patient who, as a child, was brought to the palace to experience its benefit.

Lucian, in his prayer to Mercury, beseeches that divinity to give him a ring that will enable him to renew his youth and bestow upon him all sublunary bliss. We are told that Executus, tyrant of the Phocians, was accustomed to wear two enchanted rings, by the clinking of which against each other he discovered the fitting season for his enterprises; nevertheless he perished by assassination, though previously warned by the magic sound.

To prove that ladies' rings might occasionally become chirurgically serviceable in sword-cuts we will cite the following story:

"Reginaida, the lovely daughter of Haquin, whilst nursing, like another Rebecca, a wounded knight, bethought her to place a ring in the yawning gash. Its contact immediately putting new life into the inflamed parts, healthy granulations shortly appeared, and the fortunate youth was soon restored to health. Now it would be unpardonable to repress the sequel. As the gentleman got well his nurse fell sick—dangerously sick; and when pressed by her anxious father to reveal the cause she frankly told him that the knight whose wounds she had tended had inflicted upon her a much deeper wound, and from the symptoms she felt convinced that nothing but the same remedy that had healed him could heal her, and she could only recover on the application of a ring bestowed by his hand. When the grateful and happy knight knew that his benefactress lay sick, and that the cure of the disorder was in his power, he begged for an interview, and after a few interesting words of explanation, which seemed greatly to relieve her, he put the finishing stroke to the patient's convalescence by lovingly passing the pledge-ring of betrothal over her fair pronubus."

Divination by rings is called "Dactylomancy." It was performed by suspending the ring by a fine thread over a round table, on the edge of which were made a number or marks, with the twenty-four letters of the alphabet. The ring, in vibrating over the table, stopped over certain letters, which, being joined together, afforded the desired answer.

Pineda takes from the Arabian tongue a citation worthy of the "Arabian Nights," from which it would seem that Solomon was more indebted to his ring for the very complimentary visit paid by the Queen of Sheba than to his extraordinary wisdom. Thus runs the tradition:

"As the Hebrew king was one day hastening to the river Jordan to bathe he was accosted on the bank by two lively ladies, who, entering into conversation, soon inveigled him into giving up his ring into their custody, when—not caring that the monarch should retain his wisdom, but the contrary—one of them threw it sportively into the stream, and both soon had the satisfaction of seeing that the loss of his signet had rendered Solomon as foolish as themselves. The glittering jewel, in the meantime, was swallowed by a large fish, whose intellect was so little improved by the bait that he allowed himself shortly afterwards to be caught and taken to the palace. The cook, on discovering the ring as he cleaned the fish, brought it to his royal master, who, replacing it on his finger, recovered thereon full possession of his wits and wisdom."

There is another legend of a beautiful Syrian maiden who possessed a ring, by the changes of which she was able to know of the good and evil fortune and faith of her absent lover. He, on giving it to her, informed her: "If good fortune be with me, it will retain its brightness; if evil, dim. If I cease to love and the grave opens for me, it will become black." Fitting changes then come and go upon the ring as the light and shadow of love accompany the roving lover.

Notices of thaumaturgical rings, of an antiquity long anterior to those made much of by the Saints and used against Satan, occur in many Pagan writers. Amongst these none is more famed than that of Gyges, accounts of which are given by Plutarch, by Tully, and by Cicero. This ring had the remarkable property of rendering the wearer, as he might please, visible or invisible, according to the direction of the bezel. This Gyges was a shepherd in the pay of King Candanes, and as he was wandering over the plains of Lydia during a violent storm he took shelter in a cave near where his flocks were browsing, where he discovered a huge bronze horse, with windows and doors in its side. Curiosity impelled the shepherd to crawl into the brazen quadruped, where he beheld a colossal corpse with a ring on one finger; and cupidity induced him to steal what he took to be a common ornament. Under the security afforded by this ring he plotted first against the king's honour by making love to the queen, and then against his life, in which assassination she assisted him, obtaining for the reward of this double act of treachery his wicked accomplice as a wife and succession to the vacant throne.

Some of the finest scenes in Ariosto are brought out through a magic ring. When worn on the finger it preserved from spell; and carried in the mouth, concealed the possessor from view. Thus, in the "Orlando Furioso," when Ruggiero had Angelica in the forest and secure from sight, she discovers the magic ring upon her finger, which her father had given to her when she first entered Christendom, and which had delivered her from many dangers.

One of the most remarkable instances of the extent to which annular fascination might reduce the doughty heart of a hero is that of Charlemagne:

"This mighty monarch loved a certain mistress so very passionately that for the enjoyment of her society he neglected his imperial duties. While the court was in a state of great uneasiness at the strange vehemence of so disastrous a passion the lady was taken ill in the city of Cologne, and shortly after, to the great relief of his statesmen, she died. Now comes the wonderful part of the narration. Death did not abate one iota of Charlemagne's ardent devotion, or break the spell that bound him to her; the dead body being embalmed he caused it to be dressed and placed on a couch; then taking his seat by the side of the senseless clay he would, in his infatuation, appeal to it for comfort and counsel. The venerable Bishop of the Cathedral of Cologne, who considered a living beauty was preferable to the remains of a departed one, rebuked his sovereign for his wicked passion, and revealed to him the important secret that his love arose from a "charmed

ring" that lay under the tongue of his mummy mistress. Whereupon the bishop, putting his finger into the mouth of the embalmed belle, distinctly felt the circlet under the tongue, and removed it. When the Emperor saw, as he now did, disenchanted, the ghastly features that so long fascinated him he turned away in disgust and gave orders for its immediate interment.

"And now the poor bishop, who had pocketed the ring, found himself sorely annoyed by its possession, for the monarch, still spell-bound to the holder of it, became as affectionate towards the bishop as he had previously been towards his mistress.

"To be freed from these vexatious carresses, the persecuted ecclesiastic took the ring to the environs of Aix and threw it into a lake or marsh. A year or two after, the emperor happened to be attracted to the site of the submerged ring, and found such attractions in the "dismal swamp" that here he determined to end his days, and thither accordingly the court was transferred.

"First a noble palace, next a fine cathedral, and then a flourishing town, appeared in rapid succession, and from that time till the present Aix-la-Chapelle has ever been a favourite and fashionable place of resort, though few are aware of the reason."

The Germans have a legend connected with this ring; it runs thus:

"Charlemagne, though near his dissolution, lingered in agony till the bishop caused the lake to be dragged, and silently placing the talisman on the person of the dying monarch, his struggling soul passed peacefully away." This talisman was said to have been in the possession of the late Louis Napoleon. It is described as a small nut in a golden flaggee envelopment, found round the neck of Charlemagne on the opening of his tomb, and given by the city of Aix-la-Chapelle to Bonaparte, and by him to his favourite, Hortense, Queen of Holland, at whose death it descended to her son the late Napoleon III. We should like to know what has become of it since the Emperor's death.

Will any enterprising reader try to discover its now whereabouts?

OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS.

EARLY USE OF PAPER MONEY IN THE EAST.—At the end of the thirteenth century paper money was used by Kublai Khan, as this quotation will show: "In this city of Kambain is the mint of the grand Khan, who may truly be said to possess the secret of the alchemists. He causes the bark to be stripped from the mulberry trees, which are used for feeding the silkworms, and takes from it the inner rind. This being steeped in a mortar until reduced to a pulp, which is made into paper, but quite dark. When ready for use it is cut into pieces of money nearly square. Of these some pass for a demi-tournois, others for a silver groat, and others as high as ten bezants of gold. The coinage of this paper money is authenticated with as much form as if it were actually gold and silver; for to each note a number of officers affix their names and their signets, and, when this is done by all, the principal officer deputed by the Khan, having dipped into vermilion the royal seal, stamps with it the piece of paper, so that the form of the seal tinged with the vermilion remains impressed on it, by which it receives full authentication as current money, and counterfeiting it is a capital offence. This paper money circulates throughout the Khan's dominions, nor dares anyone refuse to receive it at peril of his life; but all receive it without hesitation, because wherever their business may call them they may dispose of it again, for with it, in short, any article may be purchased. When the paper is damaged it is taken to the Mint and fresh notes given on payment

of 3 per cent. If gold or silver smiths require bullion it would be given in exchange for their notes for manufacture, but not for currency."

AN INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF ST. COLUMBA.

—One day, a short time before the saint's death, as he was returning to the monastery for the last time from a service, held apparently to win a blessing on the harvest, in the barn, he met a white horse which "as a willing servant" had daily carried the milk-vessels from the cowshed to the refectory. The animal came up to him, laid its head on his bosom, uttered plaintive cries, and like a human being shed copious tears, greatly wailing. The attendant strove to drive the weeping mourner away, but the saint forbade him, saying, "Lo, thou art thou art a man and hast a rational soul canst know nothing of my departure hence, except what I myself have told thee; but to this brute beast, devoid of reason, the Creator Himself hath evidently in some way made known that its master is about to leave it. Let it alone, let it pour out its bitter grief into my bosom."

VENICE GLASS.—The drinking glasses of the middle ages made at Venice were said to possess the peculiar property of breaking into shivers if poison were put into them. Byron remarks about this:

"Tis said that our Venetian crystal has
Such pure antipathy to poison, as
To burst, if aught of venom touches it.

STOOL OF REPENTANCE.—This was a low stool placed before the pulpit in Scotland, on which persons who had incurred an ecclesiastical censure were placed during divine service. When the service was over the "penitent" had to stand on the stool and receive the minister's rebuke. Even in the present century this method of rebuke has been repeated.

THE INCREASE OF LONDON.—James I., the two Charleses, and Cromwell looked with little favour on the increase of the City of London; Clarendon in his "History" laments that nothing had been done to "check so growing a disease," and Evelyn, in his "Diary," waxed very wroth against "that exhauster and waster of the public treasure, the progress and increase of buildings about this already monstrous city, wherein, one year with another, are erected about 800 houses. It is long since the saying of the Spanish ambassador, Count Gondomar, became current, that it was to be feared there would be no city left soon as it was all running out of the gates into the suburbs. The centre of the metropolis, too, has gradually changed from St. Paul's to Charing Cross where it is now reckoned to be. There is an old distich:

The realm of England will never be undone
Till Highgate Hill stands in the middle of
London.

Let us hope the prophecy is false, for the centre of London is certainly on the road to Highgate.

USE OF PEWTER IN THE REIGN OF HENRY VIII.—In the "Household Booke" of the Duke of Northumberland of this reign there is a charge for the hire of pewter vessels, though the description of them is not ascertained. Of the same date we have the inventory of a gentleman's buttry, comprising "two basins and two ewers of pewter, one ale pot and two wine pots of the same, two dozen of pewter trenchers, five chargers, seventeen platters, two dozen of dishes, sixteen saucers, two porringers, two plates, a washing basin, a salte, and a bottle for water," all of the same metal.

EXORCISM IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH.—The acknowledgment of exorcism in the Anglican Church during the progress of the Reformation occurs in the first Liturgy of Edward VI. (Ann. 2) in which is given the following form at baptism: "Then let the priest, looking upon the children, say, 'I command thee, unclean spirit, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, that thou come out and depart from these infants, whom our Lord Jesus Christ has vouchsafed to call to his holy baptism to be made members of his body and of his holy congregation. Therefore, thou cursed spirit, remember thy sentence, remember thy judgment,

remember the day to be at hand wherein thou shalt burn in fire everlasting prepared for thee and thy angels. And presume not hereafter to exercise any tyranny towards these infants whom Christ hath bought with his precious blood, and by this his holy baptism calleth to be of his flock.'"

AN EXCELLENT WAY TO GET A FAIRY.—The following curious recipe was found in the papers of an alchemist which are preserved in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. First, get a broad square cristall or Venice glasse, in length and breadth three inches; then lay that glasse or cristall in the blood of a white henne three Wednesdays or three Fridays. Then take it out and wash it with holy aq. and fumigate it. Then take three hazel sticks or wands of an years growth; peel them fayre and white, and make them soe longe as you write the spirit's name or fayrie's name, which you call, three times on every stick being made flatt on one side. Then bury them under some hill whereas ye suppose fayries haunt the Wednesday before you call her; and the Friday following take them uppe and call her at eight, or three, or ten of the clock, where be good planetts and houres for that time, and when you call her turn thy face towards the East, and when you have her bind her to that stone or glasse.

DESCRIPTION OF AN ELFIN CHANGELING.—Waldron, in his description of the Isle of Man, gives this account of a reputed changeling which he visited. "Nothing under Heaven," he says, "could have a more beautiful face; but although between five and six years old and seemingly healthy he was so far from being able to walk or stand that he could not so much as move any one joint; his limbs were vastly long for his age, but smaller than an infant's of six months; his complexion was perfectly delicate, and he had the finest hair in the world; he never spoke or cried, eat scarcely anything, and was very seldom seen to smile, but if anyone called him Fairy Elf, he would frown and fix his eyes so earnestly on those who said it, as if he would look them through. His mother, or, at least, his supposed mother, being very poor, frequently went out a charring and left him a whole day together; the neighbours, out of curiosity, have often looked in at the window to see how he behaved when alone, which whenever they did they were sure to find him laughing and in the utmost delight. This made them judge that he was not without company more pleasing to him than any mortal could be; and what made this conjecture seem the more reasonable was that, if he were left ever so dirty, the woman, at her return, saw him with a clean face and with his hair combed with the utmost exactness and nicety.

PRECIOUS METALS IN ENGLAND.—Small quantities of gold of the deep yellow variety have occasionally been picked up in Cornwall from the earliest times, and in the reigns of Edward I. and III. there were very considerable works at Combmartin in Devonshire; between 300 and 400 miners, sent for out of Derbyshire, were employed in them, and the produce was so considerable as to assist the Black Prince in his wars against France. In the reign of Henry III., a copper mine which was worked at Newlands, in Cumberland, is said to have contained veins of gold as well as silver. The patent rolls in the Tower record several grants, made by the sovereign to individuals, of privilege to search for gold and silver. In 1390, Richard II. granted to John Younge, refiner, all the gold and silver found in any mine in England, paying to the crown a ninth part to the church a tenth, and to the lord of the soil a thirteenth part. It may here be mentioned as indicative of the spirit of occult philosophy which prevailed in those times that in 1444 a patent was granted to John Cobbe, "that, by the art of philosophy, he might transform imperfect metals from their own proper nature and transmute them into gold and silver." In the reigns of James IV. and V., of Scotland, vast wealth was procured from the lead hills from the gold washed from the mountains; in the reign of the latter not less than the value of £300,000 sterling.

GEMS OF THOUGHT.

MOST of the shadows that cross our path through life are caused by standing in our own light.

HONOUR, like the shadow, follows those who flee from it; but honour flees from those who pursue it.

EVERY dewdrop, every raindrop has a whole heaven within it, and so has every pure and human heart.

WE spend a great portion of our life in making blunders, and a great deal more in correcting them.

MEN want restraining as well as propelling power. The good ship is provided with anchors as well as sails.

THE vain man idolises his own person, and here he is wrong; but he cannot bear his own company, and here he is right.

GRIEF knits two hearts in closer bonds than happiness ever can; as common sufferings are far stronger links than common joys.

STATISTICS.

OF late years the proportion of dependence in this country on home and foreign wheat has greatly changed. In 1852-53 consumption was at the rate of 3.75 bushels per head of home produce and of 1.35 per head of foreign; but in 1876-78 the proportion was 2.42 bushels per head of home and 3.25 per head of foreign produce.

THE French papers publish statistics to show that in Prussia the railway authorities annually kill one in every 21½ millions of their passengers, and wound one in every two millions; in Belgium, kill one in every nine millions, and wound one in every two millions; in England, kill one in every 5½ millions, and wound one in every third of a million; and France, kill one in every two millions, and wound one in every half-million. France stands highest for killing and England for wounding, while it also stands second for killing.

BEER IN FRANCE.—The manufacture of beer in France appears to be increasing considerably. Thus, while in the ten years 1830-40, the average production was 3,477,708 hectolitres, or 10.54 litres per head of the population, the average for the period 1870-80 is 7,244,857h., or 22.28 litres per head. Last year the amount was over eight million hectolitres. The exportation is rising; the average for 1870-80 was 28,659 hectolitres. On the other hand, importation, which in 1830-40 was only 1,771 hectolitres (annual average) has been, in the last decade, 248,201 hectolitres.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

A NICE WAY OF COOKING COLD MEATS.—Chop the meat fine, season with salt, pepper, a little onion or else tomato catsup. Fill a tin bread-pan two-thirds full, cover it over with mashed potato which has been salted and has milk in it; lay bits of butter over the top, and set it into a Dutch or stove oven for fifteen or twenty minutes.

DANISH PUDDING.—One cupful of tapioca, three pints of water, half a teaspoonful of salt, half a teacupful of sugar, one tumblerful of any kind of bright jelly; wash the tapioca and soak in the water over night; in the morning put in a double boiler and cook one hour; stir frequently; add the salt, sugar, and jelly, and mix thoroughly; turn into a mould that has been dipped in cold water and set away to harden; serve with cream and sugar.

BRAZILIAN TEA DIB.—Take some slices of bread about half an inch thick, cut off all crust,

steep the bread in a little milk; when soaked through cover each piece with beaten egg yolk and fry with butter a light brown; then arrange the slices on a hot plate, and lay on each piece a tolerably thick covering of powdered sugar and cinnamon well mingled.

GOOD BYE, SWEETHEART!

A SUMMER in a lifetime—that was all;
Two hearts bound in a dreamy sicken thrall,
A breath of roses, starlight dim and rare,
A girl's white hand, a strand of gilded hair.

A summer filled with perfume, and the song
Of drowsy birds that croon the whole night long;
Dark eyes, red lips, low whispers faint and sweet—
Hush! now the summer lies there at your feet

Pallid and dead; her heavy golden hair
Droops sodden round her chill limbs, marble-bare;
Her violet eyes are shut for evermore—
Why should she live when Love dies o'er and o'er?

And Love died with her—see him near her bier—
But then a new love comes with every year,
Fairer, more perfect; so you need not weep,
But only I, who watch o'er summer's sleep.

How grand the murmuring sea was on that day—
Now it is but a barren waste of grey;
How blue the sky was, like an azure well—
Now it is but a hollow, brazen bell.

Ah, well! we change so as the years go by;
Sometimes, a little thing, a smile, a sigh,
Will round our whole life to a different use—
Will chain it faster, or will break it loose.

And you and I have had our little day—
What matters it to one or both 'twas play?
The day was long and glad and ripe with mirth—
There are not many days like that on earth.

And you are changed, and I am not the same;
And, as the sweet day dies in purple flame,
We say "Good bye," with lingering lips and eyes—
Ah, me! life is so filled with sad good byes.

The twilight steals along with star and dew—
My Prince, your eyes are dusk with shadows too:
The day is dead now—dead! the two must part.
(How dark it grows!) "and so good bye, sweetheart!" F. D.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Duke of Edinburgh has consented to act as President of the International Fisheries Exhibition to be held in Edinburgh in April next. The exhibition will be open to exhibitors from all countries, and is intended to include, as far as possible, objects illustrative of, or connected with, the fisheries of the world—such, for example, as models of boats used in fishing, and of steam engines suitable for fishing boats; models of fishing boat harbours and of fishermen's houses; nets, lines, fishing rods, artificial baits, and fishing tackle of all kinds; piscicultural apparatus; apparatus used in oyster culture; fish ova and

young fry; aquaria, collections of stuffed fish and aquatic birds; paintings, photographs, and casts of fish; models of fish passes and ladders; life-boats and life-preserving apparatus; fishermen's dress and equipments; fresh, cured, and tinned fish; preparations for curing fish, and other objects of a similar nature.

It is rumoured that Mr. Froude is about to be elevated to the peerage.

FOR a romance that will begin in "Blackwood's Magazine" next January and is to run through some dozen or fourteen numbers, Mr. Anthony Trollope is to receive no less a sum than £1,000.

TRICYCLING amongst the ladies has become such a success that, emulating the bicyclists and sterner sex, it is not unlikely we shall see ladies' tricycle races among the sensations of next summer. At least it is said so.

MR. EDWARD LEVY LAWSON, of the "Daily Telegraph," has, it is said, purchased the Duke of Westminster's splendid residence at Chiswick for £200,000.

MR. DARWIN's forthcoming book is not upon an attractive subject. Worms making vegetable mould are not precisely what all the world longs to look on. But he is likely to clear up a difficulty. He will show what part worms play in the economy of nature. They have hitherto been regarded rather as food for the birds which make our fields and woods alive; but Mr. Darwin will hope to show that not even a worm lives in vain. They make the ground for vegetable life. The book is to be published next month.

THERE is a rumour that the Electric Exhibition, which is attracting so much attention at Paris, is to be brought over to the Crystal Palace when its doors are closed in the French capital.

THE benevolent Sir Moses Montefiore, Bart., now in his ninety-seventh year, telegraphed to Palestine to request that prayers might be offered for President Garfield in the synagogues of the four holy cities.

THE Conservative party have purchased the "Sunday Times," which will for the future be published at a penny instead of twopenny.

THE gay world is much occupied with the rumoured marriage of an English nobleman with the pretty actress, Mlle. Alie Regnault. No marriage has as yet been solemnised, but proposals appear to have been made. Mlle. Regnault has not appeared on the stage for the last few years, but her charms are in no wise impaired.

It is said to be the intention of those in authority to raise the tax at present levied on dogs from 7s. 6d. to £1. This will not be pleasant news to those who delight in keeping a number of canine pets.

It is stated upon good authority that the Government intend, in the forthcoming Session of Parliament, to introduce a measure for acquiring possession of all the canals throughout England. It is said that the Government have resolved upon this step for high State reasons, which it would not be prudent to make known at present.

AUTUMN styles in Paris and London are at variance. While Paris is lengthening the waists of dresses, London is declaring short waists fashionable, and is reviving the short corages of 1812.

THE Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's have before them a scheme for improving the acoustic qualities of the Cathedral. Certainly such a measure would not be taken up before it was needed. It is quite pitiful to see the exertions made by great preachers, when the service is held under the dome, to cause their voices to reach the distant members of the congregation. In many of the Continental churches the long nave of the building is furnished overhead with long stretches of wire to conduct the sound and divide the waves of it. Such a plan might be adopted, or, at all events, tested at St. Paul's, with very little delay and a very little cost. But it is a question whether the disfigurement would not be too dearly paying for the small advantage of transmitting the voice of the preacher.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. K.—The *Eri-King* is a name applied to a personified power or elementary spirit which, according to German poetical authorities, prepares mischief and ruin for mortals, and especially for children, through the most delusive allurements. It is represented to appear as a goblin, haunting the Black Forest in Thuringia. It was introduced into German poetry from the ancient Scandinavian literature, and has become widely known through Goethe's ballad of the "*Eri-König*," or *Eri-King*.

S. G.—A metronome is a clock-work contrivance for marking time in music. The credit of inventing the metronome is usually given to a man named Maelzel; but it is said more properly to belong to Diederich Winkel, of Amsterdam, Holland, who made the first instrument about 1815. Maelzel improved upon it somewhat, and appropriated the invention.

S. A.—The founder of the sect of Buddhists was the son of Suddhodhana, King of Magadha, in South Behar. The title of Buddha signifies "the sage," and was assigned to him on attaining sanctity as a teacher of religion. When a child Buddha is said to have been presented to an Indian deity, whose nod predicted great things by the time the infant came to maturity. He lived the life of a hermit, and died at the advanced age of eighty.

R. M.—To make ginger ale, take one spoonful of ground ginger, one spoonful of cream of tartar, one pint of yeast, one pound of sugar, and six quarts of cold water. Mix, and let stand a few hours, until it begins to ferment; then bottle and set in a cool place.

N. A.—A very fine oil paste blacking is thus made: Ivory-black, two pounds; treacle, four ounces; oil of vitriol, two ounces; best tallow, four ounces; gum-arabic, one ounce. Mix the oil and vitriol together, and let stand twenty-four hours; dissolve the gum in a cupful of warm water, then add three tablespoonfuls of best vinegar; beat and mix it with the oil, etc., and then add the ivory-black, treacle, and the whites of two eggs.

H. T.—To pickle onions, select the young white ones, and lay them in salt and water for two days. Change the water once; then drain them in a cloth, and put them in small bottles. Pour over them scalded vinegar, with mace, ginger and pepper in it, and secure the bottle with a bladder. Large onions can also be pickled in this manner, but they should be kept a little longer in brine.

H. B.—To get lean avoid the use of food containing much starch or sugar.

M. C.—Glycerine and lemon juice will always remove tan and sometimes freckles.

A. F.—The following recipe for drunkenness has been found efficacious in a great many cases: Sulphate of iron, five grains; peppermint water, eleven drams; spirits of nutmeg, one dram. This preparation acts as a tonic and stimulant, and so partially supplies the place of the accustomed liquor, and prevents the absolute physical and moral prostration that often follows a sudden breaking off from the use of stimulating drinks. It is to be taken in quantities equal to an ordinary dram, and as often as a desire for a dram returns.

W. M.—Fingal's Cave is a grotto on the southwest coast of the inlet of Staffa, Argyshire, Scotland, probably called after Fingal, the legendary hero of Gaelic poetry. It is formed by lofty basaltic pillars, and extends back from its mouth 227 feet. Its breadth at the entrance is 42 feet; at the inner end 22 feet. The sea is the floor of the cavern, and is about twenty feet deep at low water. The main arch has been compared to the side of a great Gothic church. The column or side walls are of stupendous size, and there are stalactites of a great variety of tints between the pillars. It is easily accessible, except at extreme high tide, by small boats. The height from the top of the cliff to the summit of the arch is about thirty feet, and from the latter to the water at mean tide about sixty feet. Broken columns form the causeway on the east side, concealing the lower parts of the front columns, so that these seem to be only eighteen feet high, while the western pillars are twice as high. The sides are columns like the front, and nearly perpendicular, but the irregular grouping and the fragmentary condition of the columns impair the symmetry of their appearance.

"BONDAGE OF BRANDON."

It is with some satisfaction that we announce to our readers that this successful story, written by Mr. Bracebridge Hemming, and first published in our columns, has been reproduced, with the consent of the proprietor of the *LONDON READER*, in a Three Volume Novel by Mr. Maxwell, the eminent publisher, the husband of Miss Braddon.

IDA, nineteen, medium height, fair, light hair, grey eyes, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young gentleman.

GROFFREY, twenty, medium height, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

THE CONVERT GIRL.

FAR up the wall, amid the eglantine,
Her window stood embowered in thickest green;
And oft she came throughout the livelong day
To sigh and muse upon the changing scene.

"Twas there the sweetest breath of morning stole,
And brightest there the dew of evening lay;
There wand'ring bees sipped nectar hour by hour,
And murmured dreamily their busy way.

From her high seat she saw the shining bay,
And where the singing river kissed the shore;
From it she watched the dreary winter pass,
And longed for summer twilight as of yore.

Once in her eyes a 'witching coyness played,
Once o'er her cheeks the mantling blushes spread;
But now on them there lay a winter's snow,
And from her eyes the glance of youth had fled.

One partner shared the quiet of her room—
A linnet caged, that fluttered all the day;
She tended it, and loved its merry trill—
A song of joyous welcome to the May.

"At last," she said, "thou long-sought one, at last;
Thou fill'st the world from brook to sunny sky;
Oh, Spring, thou thrice-blessed daughter of the year;
Oh, thou who comest when the snowdrops die.

"And May is here—the month of love and flowers;
One year ago, a weary year to me,
I know so well the way we used to take,
And see the moonlight glitter on the sea.

"Heaven knows I loved him in those happy days
With all a girl's first love—and not too well;
But in my inmost heart the secret lay,
And still I cherished what I could not tell.

"I well remember how he bade 'Good bye,'
Under the trees beside the glassy river,
And how he took my hand and drew me near,
And kissed a fond farewell, as if for ever.

"And thou, sweet bird, art singing of thy skies,
Thy rills, thy mossy bank, thy ivy tree,
And of thy mate upon the breezy hills,
And days that swiftly flew when thou wast free.

"And I, a captive too within these walls,
Am living o'er again my sunny past,
And dreaming olden dreams of youth and hope,
Too sweet, too fair, too ravishing to last.

"Oh, give me one bright hour from out the past!
One moment of that vanished golden year;
Oh, break these bonds and make me free once more,
'Twere but a living death—a lifetime here."

POLLY, nineteen, tall, fair, fair hair, blue eyes, would like to correspond with a young gentleman between twenty and twenty-two.

ANNIE and MAY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Annie is seventeen, medium height, fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children. May is tall, dark, blue eyes, good-looking, fond of home and music. Respondents must be from eighteen to twenty-one, tall, dark, good-looking.

FRED and ARTHUR, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. Fred is twenty-seven, medium height, dark hair and eyes, good-looking, loving, fond of music and dancing. Arthur is twenty-four, medium height, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, good-looking, fond of music and dancing. Respondents must be between twenty-two and twenty-four, medium height, good-looking, fond of music and dancing.

ELLIE and AMY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Ellie is twenty-four, medium height, dark, brown hair and eyes, fond of home. Amy is twenty-three, medium height, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home.

MAUDE and OLIVE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Maude is twenty-one, medium height, fair, of a loving disposition, fond of

dancing. Olive is eighteen, medium height, dark, fond of music. Respondents must be medium height, dark.

ROBERT, nineteen, medium height, dark, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home, would like to correspond with a young lady between sixteen and eighteen.

KEITH and IVAN, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Keith is nineteen, tall, fair, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music. Ivan is eighteen, tall, dark, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children. Respondents must be about eighteen or nineteen, fond of home and music.

ANNIE R., seventeen, tall, fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a dark young gentleman about twenty.

VIVIAN, PEARL and LYDIA, three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Vivian is twenty-five, medium height, dark, brown eyes, fond of home and children. Pearl is twenty-two, tall, fair, golden hair, blue eyes. Lydia is twenty, tall, dark, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home.

EDITH and MILLY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Edith is twenty, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home. Milly is eighteen, medium height, brown hair, hazel eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children. Respondents must be about twenty-one, tall, dark, of a loving disposition.

HERBERT, twenty-seven, tall, fair, dark hair and eyes, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

EVA and LILY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Eva is nineteen, medium height, auburn hair, blue eyes, good-looking, fond of home and dancing. Lily is twenty, medium height, auburn hair, blue eyes, good-looking, fond of music and dancing.

GERALD, twenty-six, medium height, dark, light hair, grey eyes, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

FLORENCE is responded to by—Charlie M., nineteen, fair, fond of home and children.

EMILY S. by—Bertie W., nineteen, tall, brown hair, grey eyes, fond of home and children.

TOMMY by—Wilfred H., twenty-one, medium height, dark, fond of home.

ETHEL by—Harry, twenty-one, medium height.

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